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ABSTRACT

Intended for college or secondary school teachers of courses beyond the basic level in freshman English and composition, this course description treats components of composition for critical thinking, including semantics, tone, logic, and argumentation, and their application to writing critical, argumentative, and research papers. The introduction discusses current theory, research, and teaching in composition. The course outline is designed for two 15-week terms, each with a set of required readings and writing assignments. The first term portion of the outline covers the following topics: basics, exposition, and development; fact, opinion, and evidence; logic and argumentative rhetoric; causes and patterns of subjectivity, partisanship, and bias; political rhetoric and semantics; and rhetorical/semantic/political analysis of mass media. The second term portion of the outline is structured to cover (1) an introduction to research and to information evaluation; (2) fact, opinion, and evidence; (3) logic and argumentative rhetoric; (4) causes and patterns of subjectivity, partisanship, and bias; (5) political rhetoric and semantics; and (6) rhetorical/semantic/political analysis of mass media. A postscript is included in which students' feedback to actual "composition for critical thinking" courses is discussed. Appendices include: a list of current periodicals with a center-conservative to center-liberal orientation; suggestions for research paper topics; a checklist for analyzing arguments; and a semantic calculator for bias in rhetoric. (JD)

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COMPOSITION FOR CRITICAL THINKING: A COURSE DESCRIPTION

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COMPOSITION FOR CRITICAL THINKING: A COURSE DESCRIPTION

Donald Lazere

Several recent reports on literacy in the United States, including the 1980 National Assessment of Writing and the 1980 Report of the Commission on the Humanities, have identified critical thinking as an essential aspect of education that today's students are especially weak in and that the back-to-basics movement has not adequately addressed. My sense of current theory and research in composition is that their main focus has been on basic writing and on the generation and organization of one's own ideas, to the neglect of critical evaluation of information received from outside and of those elements of composition that deal most directly with such evaluation: semantics, tone, logic and argumentation, and their application to writing critical, argumentative, and research papers. For several years I have been developing an approach to teaching Freshman English and other composition courses beyond the basic level that emphasizes these elements, so I offer this course description in the hope that it may be useful to other college or secondary-school teachers looking for ways to incorporate instruction in critical thinking.

Perhaps one reason the study of composition has not focused more on reasoning is that "composition" is a misnomer for courses beyond the basic level that might more aptly be titled "Critical Reading, Writing, and Thinking." In college-level composition, the quality of writing is inseparable from the quality of reasoning, since writing is a process of clarifying and articulating ideas--both one's own and those received from reading and other outside sources. If composition is not to be just a "service course" but an integral part of the English and humanities curriculum, it cannot be taught in an intellectual or academic vacuum. It should provide students with means of incorporating in their writing the body of knowledge they are accumulating in other studies, as well as showing them the necessity for building that body and developing a critical perspective on it in order to mature as writers. (E.D. Hirsch has argued that intellectual clarity and sophistication do not necessarily produce clear writing; by the same token, however, a piece of writing may be relatively readable, in Hirsch's terms, but be poorly reasoned, devoid of original or insightful ideas, and inadequately grounded in knowledge of the subject. I believe that most responsible composition teachers do, consciously or unconsciously, consider the attainment of intellectual and rhetorical maturity, not just syntactic fluency, an intrinsic part of the teaching and evaluation of writing, and are correct in doing so--Hirsch notwithstanding.[1])

In other words, I am asserting that composition should be a humanistic discipline in its own right, with an academic subject beyond practice in various facets of writing. That subject is the nature of critical thinking--as constituted through the study of literature, rhetoric, and semantics--and its applicability to study in all other academic fields as well as to current public discourse in politics, economics, news, entertainment, popular books and periodicals, and other mass media. In this broad sense, composition should indeed be a service course--"basic" in the sense of an introduction to the distinctive critical perspective that humanistic sensibility provides on all learning. Thus reading and writing assignments in the course are divided between those about various aspects of critical thought and those applying them; this entails somewhat more reading and lecture/discussion and less day-to-day writing practice, especially in class, than in most composition courses. My experience, however, is that this application of writing instruction to the development of critical consciousness typically motivates students to produce writing that is considerably more mature, both in thought and form, than in more conventional composition courses because they come to perceive the process of writing, not as an isolated end in itself but as a means of assimilating knowledge and analytic skills that are

integral to their other studies and general intellectual growth.

The development of critical thinking is a particularly urgent responsibility of English education in the circumstances of contemporary society. As I have written elsewhere, "If literacy is defined, as it should be, in the larger sense of breadth of knowledge and capacity for reason, then it is evident that the greatest threats to literacy in the twentieth century are mass-mediated political thought control and the reason-numbing effects of mass culture, and that English, as the discipline preeminently responsible for fostering literacy, must provide critical weapons for combatting these anti-rational forces."[2] The pervasiveness and sophistication of both political and commercial propaganda in our time far exceed any past period of history. Moreover, recent studies of literacy in the United States have increasingly emphasized the low level in students of precisely those areas of education that are most necessary to resist propagandistic indoctrination. Horror stories abound among college teachers concerning their students' ignorance of the most elementary facts of history, political science and world affairs. At this time when competing economic ideologies are at the center of public controversy, the extent of education in economics among the majority of citizens, including college graduates, is

pitifully inadequate for understanding rampant inflation, tax policy, "supply-side economics," and other current economic issues. A growing number of empirical studies of television and other mass media emphasize not only their propagandistic power and inadequacies as conveyors of news and other public information, but their destructive effect on reading ability and cognitive capacities in children due to the passive modes of perception and the confusions between images and reality that they engender, as well as to their accelerated, fragmented discursive structure.

There is an unmistakable congruence between the state of social consciousness that propaganda and mass media tend to induce and the kind of cognitive problems analyzed by scholars of basic writing like Mina Shaughnessy and Andrea Lunsford, as well as by sociolinguists like Basil Bernstein and developmental psychologists like Lawrence Kohlberg.[3] Shaughnessy's and Lunsford's basic writers, the social groups that Bernstein describes as having restricted linguistic and conceptual codes, and the individuals that Kohlberg characterizes as being arrested in conventional stages of development all tend to have the following problems: difficulties in concentration and sustaining an extended line of thought in reading and writing; inability to reason from the concrete to the abstract and vice versa,

from the personal to the impersonal and from the literal to the figurative, and to perceive irony, ambiguity, and multiplicity of points of view; social and moral perceptions that are egocentric, ethnocentric, absolutist, authoritarian and conformist.

Concern over these matters transcends partisan political lines. Social critics on both the left and right express alarm over an actual or potential regression in national literacy leading toward an Orwellian society of stupefied, conformist masses controlled by political and media elites. It is incumbent, then, on all disciplines and segments of American education to formulate a non-partisan crash program for re-orienting schooling toward raising the level of critical civic consciousness. The role of English, and particularly composition, in this re-orientation should be a central one, for several reasons. First, composition courses have a distinctive capacity for building the cognitive and conceptual abilities inhibited by television and propaganda; they can be developmentally structured toward fostering Bernstein's elaborated codes and Kohlberg's post-conventional, autonomous cognitive-moral stages. Second, as Orwell argued, the manipulation and corruption of language are the key instruments of thought control. Conversely, composition courses can apply the critical insights of literature and literary theory, the analytic tools of

logic, argumentation, and general semantics to build critical consciousness toward the language of media, politics, and economics. These, then, are the goals of this course.

Many composition teachers and authors of textbooks do use sources dealing with politics, economics, or mass media--though usually in a somewhat random way--to illustrate rhetorical principles.[4] In most cases, however, fostering critical civic consciousness is not the explicit ultimate aim of their courses or books, as it is in this course. I say "ultimate" to emphasize that it is not my intention to intrude political material at all points in the course, especially where it is not directly pertinent or where it would preempt other important aspects of composition study.[5] My purpose in this outline is to show how everything essential to a freshman English course can be amply covered, while at the same time indicating precisely where and how aspects of literature, semantics, rhetoric, and research can fruitfully be applied to political analysis. The frequency of these points increases as the course progresses into more advanced conceptual operations, notably units on logic, argumentation and research in the second term; many of the connections with politics made in the earlier units culminate in a unit on the semantics of politics to be incorporated in the second-term research paper. (The sections dealing

with politics may appear to take up more of the course than they do in practice, simply for the reason that I go into more detail on them here than on those sections dealing with more orthodox aspects of composition, which do not need glossing. Emphasis on the distinctive topics for study and writing in this course also preempts detailed discussion here of the process of paper-writing, instruction in which can employ any current approaches to invention, audience, etc.)

It is perhaps best before getting into the course outline to discuss some of the pedagogical difficulties in applying the foregoing approach and to anticipate possible objections to it. To begin with, analyzing the rhetoric and semantics of politics and economics obviously presupposes that students have some minimal prior knowledge of these subjects, and the rhetorical-semantic analysis inevitably entails some collateral exposition by the instructor of various political and economic theories. What is a reasonable expectation of prior knowledge, and how much political and economic theory can be reviewed for rhetorical purposes in an English course without turning it into a political science or economics course? My rule of thumb is that the nature and level of such knowledge expected of students prior to, or imparted to them in, the course is not equivalent to what they would acquire in a college course in politics or economics. It

is equivalent to what might reasonably be expected of any critical reader or viewer of daily news, entertainment, and advertising media, of any voter exposed to the messages propagated by political candidates and special interest groups; the one academic prerequisite that seems to me justifiable on this level is a high school civics class.

Moreover, the main emphasis here is not on conveying knowledge of politics and economics to students, but on conveying to them how little they know if their sources of information are limited to mass media, politicians and interest groups--how infinitely more complex political and economic issues are than the way they are typically presented in conventional public discourse. The limit of the course's intentions, then, is to inoculate students with a dose of skepticism toward conventional sources of information, then to acquaint them with the courses of study and research resources available on a college campus that can enable them to gain a more adequately informed critical viewpoint on public issues.

It might be objected along similar lines that college composition teachers' training is in literature and rhetoric, that they are not, and should not be expected to be, specialists in mass media, political science, or economics. My answer would be, again, that the level of knowledge in these subjects demanded here is no more than

that of any humanistically educated scholar fulfilling her or his minimal responsibility to be a critical observer of daily public discourse. If it is reasonable for graduate schools to certify that Ph.D. candidates in English have literary knowledge at the depth of familiarity with the Scottish Chaucerians or deconstructionist theory, it would seem equally reasonable to certify that they have sufficient breadth of knowledge to apply literary and rhetorical analysis to criticism of the language of public discourse on current issues impinging on all citizens' lives.

A related objection I can anticipate is that the emphasis on public discourse, particularly throughout the second term, preempts the focus on writing about literature common in the second term of freshman English at many colleges. I personally regret this preemption but firmly believe that so long as American secondary schools continue in their failure to provide entering college students with minimally adequate critical consciousness for citizenship, this emphasis must take priority over writing about literature, which, valuable though it is in itself, can be deferred to a sophomore-level course. Literary texts, however, certainly can and should be used at all points in this course--as I indicate throughout the description--both for illustrations of stylistic and rhetorical principles and for critical insights in analysis

of public discourse. This course would not have evolved into its present form except through a creative dialectic between my literary education and the heightened political consciousness of the 1960's. It is not simply a matter of selecting literature for study that is thematically "relevant" (a not unworthy ideal, incidentally, which has been ridiculed as simplistically in the past decade as it was sometimes advocated in the sixties). The larger relevance of studying literature is in the qualities of mind it fosters: the capacities to unify and make thematic connections in one's experience, to form judgments of quality and taste, to be attuned to skepticism, irony, ambiguity, multiple points of view and multiple dimensions of meaning and structure. The more I have deviated in my own studies away from literature into politics, economics, and mass media, the more I have become convinced that the greatest faults in American public discourse stem from the absence of precisely these qualities of the literary mentality. The connections can and should be made, then, more explicitly than they are in most composition courses.

A final possible reservation teachers might have is that the course may appear to try to cover too large and diffuse a range of subjects. As for diffuseness, my response is that the applicability of a unified theory and methodology to a wide variety of subjects is precisely the point of the course, providing far greater continuity and coherence than in composition courses lacking a unifying principle. Admittedly, however, finding time to cover everything in the course plan is a struggle. It can only be accomplished adequately in two integrated terms, with three to four semester hours or four to five quarter hours of class meetings each term, taught by the same instructor or by a staff using a coordinated syllabus. Some of the portions dealing with politics, economics, and mass media may have to be covered sketchily, with just enough time spent to indicate the applicability of the course's analytic method to them and with recommendations by the teacher of further pertinent readings or courses. My justifications for not dropping these portions altogether are, first, that they are all integral to the course's unifying conception and that conveying this conception whole is more important than exhaustive emphasis on any one part of it, and, second, that these portions deal with vital subjects and provide insights which students tell me again and again that they have never gotten in any other class or department. My

strongest justification for continuing to teach the course in general as I have, and for writing this account of it, is the many anonymous class evaluations in which students have attested that although it made unusually heavy demands on their time, intellect, and emotions, it greatly increased their motivation to read, write, and think critically and revealed to them a valuable new way of understanding their college studies as well as the public and personal worlds they live in.

FIRST TERM

Required Readings:

(1) A standard, full-sized rhetoric or rhetoric-reader and handbook.

(2) A collegiate dictionary.

(3) Daniel Boorstin, The Image.

(4) James Thurber, My Life and Hard Times.

(5) Jeffrey Schrank, Snap, Crackle, and Popular Taste.

(6) A reader on semantic and social dimensions of language, such as Paul Eschholz, Alfred Rosa, and Virginia Clark's Language Awareness; Stephen K. Tollefson and Kimberly S. Davis's Reading and Writing About Language; or Gary Goshgarian's Exploring Language.

Writing Assignments:

(1) Papers approximately every ten days, 500-1000 words.

(2) A journal containing writing exercises, comments on class readings and discussions, notes and outlines on ideas for possible papers, informal essays applying topics covered in the class to information received in other courses, current mass media and popular culture. Turned in for grading about once a month.

First Through Seventh Week: Basics, Exposition and Development

Most of the first half of the term consists of a more or less orthodox review of persistent trouble spots in mechanics, spelling, grammar, usage, etc., and study of effective sentence and paragraph structure, invention and modes of exposition and development, with corresponding written exercises and papers. The sequence of units here and throughout the two terms is somewhat arbitrary and variable; I find that the more mechanical elements can be more effectively taught if they are integrated with study of the more advanced aspects of writing. And study of even elementary mechanics can, in class discussion, be put into a conceptual framework fostering cognitive development toward critical analysis, through the modes of reasoning that recent research on composition indicates many of today's students are especially week in due to the influence of television, restricted linguistic codes in family background, lack of early and extensive practice in reading, and other factors emphasizing oral rather than written communication. Thus, I use exercises in grammar, punctuation, and spelling structured like those suggested by Shaughnessy, Andrea Lunsford in "Cognitive Development and the Basic Writer,"[6] and W. Ross Winterowd in "The Grammar of Coherence,"[7] to develop analytic and synthetic reasoning.

The study of organization, at the level both of the sentence and paragraph and the whole essay, should be based

on the principle that writing is a process by which we clarify, articulate, and order perceptions and data--a function for which oral or visual communication cannot effectively substitute. From punctuation to sentence syntax to the outline of a complete essay or book, written structure relates and sequences ideas into increasingly extended lines of reasoning through the full repertory of expository modes. Although the next unit in the course deals more fully with diction and style, the point can be made here that patterns of imagery, figures of speech, and symbols work integrally with expository techniques in unifying experience through developing themes and synthesizing the concrete and the abstract, the particular and the general, the writer's personal experience and acquired knowledge, past history and present-day society; the merging of each writer's unique vision and voice with cultural tradition and established conventions of language constitutes a literary style. One class period can be devoted to a lecture and readings of poems sketching the history of literary theory regarding the power of the poetic imagination to connect diverse ideas and experiences, from Elizabethan and neoclassical "wit" and the metaphysical conceit to the surrealistic juxtapositions of Allen Ginsberg, Bob Dylan, or the Beatles.

The natural sequence here is from expressive writing and readings, with exercises drawn from the pedagogical

methods of Ken Macrorie and Peter Elbow, to narration and description, then later in the course to more objective and reader-based modes of exposition, and ultimately to critical analysis. Among the first models for personal essay style that I assign is James Thurber's little classic, My Life and Hard Times, chosen mainly for the pure joy of Thurber's wit and bizarre imagination, but also for its unifying variations, from foreword through afterword, on the seriocomic theme of the disparity between cosmic aspirations and mundane realities and its reflection in the elaborate sequences of antithesis in syntax, paragraph development, and imagery that structure what appears to be conversationally spontaneous prose.

The class goes on to read and write about anthology selections applying narrative and descriptive exposition to topical subjects such as war, poverty, crime, political oppression, ecology, abortion, racial, sex-role, or social-class relations. Stress is placed here on the power of narration and description to enable us to see events from another viewpoint than our own egocentric and ethnocentric one, as well as to communicate the immediate, visceral experience of issues that mass media reportage and public rhetoric tend to turn into distant, impersonal abstractions.

An excellent teacher's guide that I use as a source for ideas in helping students to move in their own writing from self-expression, narration, and description toward

critical analysis is Ira Shor's Critical Teaching and Everyday Life.[8] Shor, drawing from Paolo Freire's methods of developing literacy for critical consciousness, describes a sequence of class discussions and paper assignments that starts with students' immediate experience with jobs, schooling, mass media, and McDonald's hamburgers, then builds into study and written analysis of the social structures and values they represent.

I have found that other, more analytic expository modes are best introduced, not as topics for formalistic, isolated exercises--"Write a 500-word comparison and contrast essay"--but as a repertory of reasoning operations or relationships among data and ideas that writers draw from heuristically (though often unconsciously) in a multitude of possible combinations during the process of invention in most real-life writing situations. Whenever possible, then, I incorporate expository exercises functionally in other units of the course: comparison and contrast linked to imagery or argument by analogy, definition and classification to semantics, cause and effect to logic, etc.

A good reading to illustrate these points and sum up the unit on exposition is James Baldwin's essay "Notes of a Native Son." Baldwin starts with the narrative juxtaposition of the death of his father, the birth of his sister, and a Harlem race riot, all on the

same day in 1943. He works back and forth from the literal events to an interpretation of them as metonymies for the struggle between hatred and love, life-destroying and life-affirming impulses, imposed on black Americans by the circumstances of white racism. (A central argumentative intention here, as in much of Baldwin's writing, is to place black hostility toward whites in its historical, cause-effect context--a context that Baldwin claims many whites tend to ignore, it being in their interests to try to forget the history of American racism.) Baldwin embodies his themes in descriptions enlivened by figurative and symbolic images, as well as in a complex narrative style in which time sequence is juggled for purposes of comparison and contrast. Thus the essay demonstrates how a skillful writer uses literary technique and form to express themes, combining a wide range of expository and stylistic devices in what is ultimately an argument about issues of the utmost social importance.

Eighth Through Eleventh Week: Diction, Style, Semantics

This unit begins with a survey of aspects of diction and style including definition and other uses of the dictionary, varieties and levels of diction, denotation and connotation, imagery, figurative language, and symbolism. This survey is integrated with an introduction to the philosophy of general semantics and its applications to critical analysis of contemporary public discourse. Two new books are introduced here, Daniel Boorstin's The Image and a collection of readings on semantic and social dimensions of language. In addition, I present lectures and printed excerpts from literary and other humanistic sources tracing the themes of semantics from the Platonic theory of logos through Renaissance neoplatonism, to Swift's satirical reflections on the relations between physical reality, literal and figurative language, to the bond between nature and language in the English romantics and American transcendentalists, up to twentieth-century critiques by writers like Huxley, Orwell, and Camus of political abstractions, euphemisms, and jargon, and the deconstructions of traditional semantic assumptions by recent literary artists and theorists associated with structuralism and semiotics. Writing assignments, which are less frequent here to compensate for increased readings and class discussion, include summaries and evaluations of assigned readings,

stylistic analyses of passages from Swift, Emerson, Thoreau, Thurber, and Boorstin (who provides an exemplary prose style along with insightful semantic analysis), and interpretations of the semantic themes in the literary sources.

Some topics for discussion and writing drawn from the language reader are the recent debates over "students' right to their own language" and dialects vs. Standard English, verbal taboos and censorship, "the literacy crisis," and the role of semantics in class, racial and gender relations, especially through stereotypes of social classes, sex roles, racial and ethnic groups in the language, visual and dramatic representations of mass media.

One key concept in semantics is the representation and potential distortions of physical reality in language, visual images, and other symbols. Obvious connections can be made here with the same themes in literature--such as Hamlet's distaste for counterfeit appearances--and in literary theorists who variously see literature as a distortion of reality (Plato), a mirror of it (Aristotle and neoclassicism), or a heightening or transcendence of reality (the romantics). Reading The Image cover to cover gives students a comprehensive, eye-opening survey of the myriad ways our sense of reality has become distorted by false images fostered by

mass media, all with the common element of "extravagant expectations," idealized images of life that media hype leads us to believe are attainable but that are in fact illusions, more glamorous than real life can possibly be. Thus Boorstin discusses the sensationalizing and artificial stimulation of news reporting by the fabrication of pseudo-events and self-fulfilling prophecies; the replacement in our time of heroes by celebrities, pseudo-heroes who often have accomplished little of enduring importance but are built up by the media into larger-than-life icons; the extravagent expectations about travel fostered by the tourist industry and by our immersion in photographic imagery that makes us experience the real Grand Canyon as a copy of photos of it, or validate our being there by taking a snapshot; the dissolving of previously stable cultural conventions motivated by the ceaseless quest of the culture industry for profit-stimulating novelty, such as the changes in sports tailored to TV coverage, including extended length of seasons and number of teams and jazzed-up patterns of play (even choreographed to musical accompaniment), or the phenomena of novels being turned into movies or of movies turned into novels or comic strips; and finally, and most significantly, the turning of political campaigning and diplomacy into media pseudo-events (a process much accelerated since publication of

The Image in 1962) in which substantive policies are subordinated to frequency of media exposure, attractive visual appearance and glib verbal delivery--all increasingly packaged by advertising agencies or media consultants. A common thread in all these extravagant expectations is the false belief that enlightenment can be attained through the attenuated discourse of newspaper columns and Reader's Digest, the 30-second TV spot, the packaged travel tour, the carefully controlled press conference or "Meet the Press" type interview.

Boorstin's analysis of image-manipulation in advertising leads into class discussion of the confusing mingling of the fictitious and the real in TV commercials and other advertising: the frequent semantic disparity between the images of products in ads or packages and the real thing; illusory corporate-image personalities like Betty Crocker, Mr. Goodwrench, or the actor portraying a sage old New England farmer who assures us that "Pepperidge Fa-ah-ms still remember how" (Pepperidge Farms, Incorporated, is located in urban Norwalk, Connecticut). The fallacious appeal to authority in celebrities' endorsements of products or causes in fields where they have no more expertise than anyone else; Karl Malden drawing on the authority of the detective he played on "Streets of San Francisco" to assure us of the safety of American Express Travelers Checks; the weird

ontological world of Commercialland, in which people's only concerns are which brand names to buy and in which we are expected to accept the veracity and authority of actors playing Mrs. Olson or the family druggist. (Commercials are not, of course, the only form of drama that expects us to suspend belief about reality, and this topic can lead into good discussions and papers comparing and contrasting commercials with other forms of literature and art in terms of realism.) Boorstin's theme of extravagant expectations can also be applied to both the exaggerated fears and the excessive preoccupation with personal sanitation and safety fostered by ads for deodorants and mouthwash, insurance and travelers checks.

Other readings here on semantic abstractions, imagery and figurative language, jargon and euphemism include Orwell's classic "Politics and the English Language," Aldous Huxley's "Words and Behavior" in Tollefson and Davis, which analyzes the abstract nature of public rhetoric on war and patriotism, and Camus's "Reflections on the Guillotine," on the euphemizing of the realities of capital punishment.

The next topic is the power of imposing one's own definitions and choice of connotations, not only in establishing and restricting the terms of an argument but in determining people's perceptions of social reality. (Lewis Carroll's Humpty Dumpty is a good source

for class discussion here, as is Allen Ginsberg's statement, "Whoever controls the language, the images, controls the race" and Stokely Carmichael's "Definition is very, very important because I believe that people who can define are masters.") Current issues in which such control of definitions is vital include abortion ("pro-life" vs. "pro-choice") and "affirmative action" vs. "reverse discrimination." Herbert Marcuse points out that in wars this country's soldiers are habitually referred to as "our boys," while the opponents are rarely called "their boys" but rather "enemy troops," "communists," or the label of whatever political party has forcibly recruited and sent them to the front with the same semantically conditioned hatred of our "enemy troops." An essential trait of political demagogy, simplistic division of the world into good guys and bad guys, depends on the systematic use of such buzzwords to trigger conditioned reflexes--purr-words always being applied to "us" and snarl-words to "them." (I prefer to use Lenny Bruce's terms: "cleans" and "dirties.") Throughout both terms of the course students in their journals compile sets of cleans and dirties that they encounter both in course work and in current public rhetoric.

This study of the capacity of definitions and connotations to control people's perceptions of reality leads into a class period on the control of language in the

larger context of the tendencies in the contemporary world toward total social control through regimentation of thought. The purpose here--reiterating the central one throughout both terms of the course--is to show students the necessity of expanding their scope of literacy and their critical skills, not merely for personal or vocational needs, but in order to maintain freedom of thought against pressures toward conformity. The sections in 1984 on Newspeak provide an extreme paradigm of the potential of a totalitarian society to control thought by ruling out of the dictionary any words which signify concepts threatening to social regimentation. Other sources briefly referred to include the notions, termed "Critical Theory," of Herbert Marcuse and other members and followers of the Frankfurt School concerning one-dimensional language and the closed universe of discourse in modern political rhetoric and mass media; Basil Bernstein's hypothesis that the linguistic and cultural restrictions inflicted on certain segments of the working class in some--though not all--ways inhibit their capacity to understand social and political problems outside the immediate scope of their experience; and Lawrence Kohlberg's models of conventional and post-conventional stages of moral/cognitive development. At this point students begin (and continue through the rest of the first term) reading Jeffrey Schrank's Snap, Crackle, and

Popular Taste, an easily readable version of ideas similar to those of the Frankfurt School on the totally administered society. Schrank's theme is the movement in contemporary America toward the total packaging of culture and programming of consciousness. His examples include TV entertainment and advertising, shopping malls, housing and other architecture, Muzak, mass-produced and marketed food, cars, and other commodities. The ideas of Schrank and other sources referred to here are not presented as gospel truth but as viewpoints for students to evaluate from their own perspectives--both models for, and subjects of, written critical analysis.

Twelfth Through Thirteenth Week: Tone

The study of tone as an aspect of essayistic prose does not receive adequate attention in most composition courses and manuals, but it is an important element in the development of critical consciousness. Tone is not just a matter of rhetorical style, technique or ethos, but a reflection of the writer's general attitude toward life. An absolutist, authoritarian mentality is apt to reveal itself in a tone of dogmatic certitude, credulousness, and unqualified assertion, as well as in sentimentalizing of people in positions of authority, power, or celebrity. (A vocal version of this tone that has become part of the coded mythology of radio and TV is the deep, mellowed-with-experience voice of a John Wayne, Karl Malden for American Express, or Walter Cronkite--"And that's the way it is"--projecting omniscient competency and patriarchal command; a woman's voice, high-pitched male one, or even news delivered by more than one announcer tends to shatter the conventionalized illusion of authority, although these codes have changed somewhat in recent years.)

As an antidote to absolutism I spend a class period surveying the skeptical tradition in humanistic thought from the Socratic dialogues to Catch-22, along with analyses of the will to believe and authoritarianism by William James, Dostoevsky, Freud, Huxley, Orwell, and

Fromm. I distribute a handout of quotations on skepticism such as the following from J. Mitchell Morse's The Irrelevant English Teacher:

> I believe in the development of a critical, skeptical, humorous habit of mind--in the development of a liberally educated consciousness, a sensitivity to nuances and unstated implications, an ability to read between the lines and to hear undertones and overtones--both for the sake of political and social enlightenment and for the sake of our personal enlightenment and pleasure as individuals. I am a teacher of literature and of writing because I believe that precision, clarity, beauty and force in the use of language, and appreciative perception of these qualities in the language of others, not only make us harder to fool but are good things in themselves; since in a free society we are not only citizens but also individuals. I believe that the more sensitively we perceive things the more fully we can live and the less likely we are to be imposed on by advertisers, politicians and other saviors.[9]

Finally, I caution against making an absolute value out of skepticism itself, pointing out that skepticism is not the same thing as cynicism and that there are circumstances in which both respect for authority and the expression of strong beliefs, adequately reasoned and supported, are fully warranted, indeed morally imperative; a task of the discriminating thinker and writer is to ascertain rationally in any given situation whether conviction or skepticism is called for, not simply to give in to one or the other as a conditioned reflex.

Rather than studying irony as a figure of speech, as is common practice in composition courses, I include it in this unit on tone, as a corollary of the skeptical attitude and as the opposite of sentimentality. Both the literary tradition and current public events provide ample illustrations of the various types of irony, demonstrating that a sense of the capricious twists that life is apt to take is a strong antidote against excessive credulousness and certitude. People and things are frequently the opposite of what they appear or claim: an item in today's news, recalling Molière's Tartuffe or Shakespeare's Measure for Measure, tells of a fundamentalist minister and officer of Californians for Biblical Morality being arrested for soliciting a police decoy for prostitution; the selfless leader of left-wing people's movements may turn into a megalomaniac like the Rev. James Jones; Richard Nixon and Spiro Agnew were elected on a platform of morality and law and order. Americans experienced an ironic disparity between intention and achievement when our involvement in the Vietnam War, which was intended to save South Vietnam from Communism, ended up pushing neutral forces there into allying with the Communists. The New Left's attempts in the sixties to rally the American masses to its ideal of "participatory democracy" resulted in massive right-wing backlash. Murphy's Law that whatever can go wrong

will, came to haunt the scientists, officials, and journalists who only months or days before the Three Mile Island accident were citing as gospel the studies projecting that a nuclear plant accident of that magnitude could be expected only once in three million reactor years. Liberal government policies intended to reduce social inequalities may end up entrenching government bureaucrats while leaving the inequalities unchanged. My favorite illustration of the difference between verbal and dramatic irony is the telegram that Ugandan dictator Idi Amin sent to President Nixon when Nixon was resisting pressure to resign late in 1973: "I congratulate you on your courageous stand. Any other, weak leader would have resigned or committed suicide under the circumstances." If Amin was being intentionally ironic, the irony was verbal; if he was sincere, the irony became dramatic.

A couple of class periods are devoted to sentimentality. Emotional appeal, the argumentative counterpart to sentimentality, is studied in the second term of the course; in both cases the development of critical faculties includes learning to distinguish emotion that is sincere and warranted by the situation from that which is excessive, unrealistically idealized, phony, manipulative, corny--"sappy," in current student slang--or evoked with a double standard in behalf of a particular

interest group. Such distinctions are also an intrinsic element in literature and literary criticism, so here again exercises can be drawn from literary readings. Students look for examples of sentimentality to evaluate for their journals and final paper in current politics and other news, popular fiction, films, TV dramas, pop music, sports, newspaper and magazine feature articles, ads (such as Bell Telephone's "Reach out and touch someone" campaign), greeting cards, and commercially promoted holidays like Christmas and Mother's Day.

One form of sentimentality pervades and impedes critical thinking in many influential realms of public discourse--the contrived, professional optimism of the booster, the flag-waver, the flack. I ask students to watch for and note in their journals instances of the following patterns of rote optimism in political rhetoric, mass media, schoolbooks and classes. (1) Discourse by and about politicians that assumes them as a class to be high-minded public servants devoted to firm ideological principles, while minimizing the prevalence of political lying and equivocation, graft, patronage, conflicts of interest, subservience to special interests, and other abuses of office. (2) Discourse by and about big business that presents a rosily one-sided image of corporations, business executives, and the wealthy as selfless and public-spirited, while playing down the extent of fraud,

speculation, collusion and other attempts at manipulating domestic and world markets and governments, shoddy manufacturing or safety and health controls, industrial pollution, exploitation of labor, and deceptive advertising and marketing practices. (3) Equally dewy-eyed leftist writing that automatically, facilely assumes the virtue of labor, minorities, protest movements, socialist or Third-World societies. (4) Romanticized accounts of United States history, present-day society, and foreign policy that convey the myth that America and Americans are exempt from the baser motives that we readily attribute to every other nation and people. (5) Media coverage of show business, sports, and other celebrities that consists mainly of puffery, playing down the cold-blooded business calculations behind the public image and the normal human frailties of "stars"--to say nothing of the megalomania and neurotic insecurities that not infrequently drive people to seek celebritydom or that afflict them as a result of attaining it. (6) Religious hucksterism and the religiosity that plays on the sentiments and trappings of religion without any real spiritual or theological substance.

The image of the world projected by the professional optimist glosses over the venality, opportunism and sycophancy, spite, lust for and abuse of power, and general pettiness that are encountered in most realms of social

organization. The projection of sentimentalized images of society is in the interests of those who dominate and benefit from the social status quo; providing a more realistic, skeptical view has been the historical role of literary artists, critics, philosophers and scholars. Their skepticism, to be sure, is susceptible to an equally rote "professional pessimism" that may reflect the self-interest of the powerless. Each camp is inclined to dismiss positions advanced by the other as the propaganda of either a self-serving establishment or spiteful prophets of gloom. Here again, critical readers and writers need to maintain an awareness of the possible presence of either rote optimism or pessimism in any text under study so that they will not be swayed by its tone alone; but they need to judge each text on its own merits without dismissing it simply for the presence of sentimentality or cynicism. Students should also be made aware that our own judgments on sentimentality and skepticism are apt to be colored by subjectivity and selective vision. The political left is inclined to sentimentalize the poor, labor, minorities, Third World and socialist societies, the Kennedys, and Jane Fonda, while the political right sentimentalizes the middle class and rich, big business, whites, America, Nixon, Reagan, and John Wayne--and each camp is equally predisposed toward skepticism about the other's heroes.

Fourteenth Through Fifteenth Week: Critical Analysis

The discussion of evaluating tone, and the earlier one of the programming of mass thought and taste, based on Schrank's Snap, Crackle, and Popular Taste, lead into the culminating unit of the term, on critical analysis. I lecture for a few periods on various approaches to the definition and criteria of critical taste. These include (1) judgments of quality, authenticity, sincerity, originality, etc., and (2) levels of literacy or intellect in discoursers and audiences, in terms of what sociologists like Herbert Gans call "taste cultures" (highbrow, lowbrow, middlebrow), or of stages of education (high school and below, college students and graduates, professionals and scholars) and of Kohlberg's stages of moral-cognitive development (pre-conventional, conventional, post-conventional). We apply these terms to current discourse in politics, journalism, and the arts. Assuming that students are most familiar with mass media whose audience is mainly lowbrow or pre-college, I introduce them to a survey of middlebrow-to-highbrow periodicals (see Appendix One) which will be continued in the second term in the contexts of their usefulness as research sources and of their ideological viewpoints.

Composition textbooks containing a section on critical writing most often key it restrictively to critical papers and book reports on literary works. For

their final paper and for short essays in their journals I encourage students, using examples from Schrank or from Ira Shor's Critical Teaching and Everyday Life as models, to write a critical review on any subject of their choice, ranging from highbrow or lowbrow literary works to films, TV programs, popular music concerts or recordings, sports events, advertisements, works of architecture such as campus dormitories or classroom buildings, restaurants or the local McDonald's, supermarkets and the food products and marketing techniques therein, automobiles and other everyday consumer products.

SECOND TERM

Required Readings:

(1) A collegiate dictionary.

(2) The same rhetoric/handbook can be used as in the first term if it contains thorough sections on both the research paper and on logic and argumentation or persuasion, or it can be supplemented by a textbook such as Howard Kahane's Logic and Contemporary Rhetoric, Ray Kytle's Clear Thinking for Composition, Richard Altick's Preface to Critical Reading, Robert Fogelin's Understanding Arguments, Monroe Beardsley's Writing With Reason, or Geoffrey Wagner and Sanford Radner's Language and Reality: A Semantics Approach to Writing.

(3) Robert Cirino, We're Being More Than Entertained (Honolulu: Lighthouse Press, 1977).

(4) In addition, I ask all the students to read a newspaper every day, bring it to class, and discuss items that illustrate points made throughout the term, with emphasis on news reports, the editorial-opinion section, letters to the editor, and ads. I also refer them to pertinent current magazine articles and book reviews as well as TV newscasts and documentaries.

(5) If it is an election year we discuss campaign rhetoric throughout the term, and when the California Voter's Booklet becomes available, we analyze the pro-and-con arguments on ballot propositions; in non-election years we do the same with controversial past propositions.

Writing Assignments:

(1) Four papers, 750-1000 words, two before the research paper, two after.

(2) Research paper, minimum 3000 words.

(3) Journal, in the same form as first term.

First Week: Introduction to Research and Evaluating Sources of Information

For the purposes of this course, the most effective structure for the second term is one that covers argumentative writing and the writing of research papers. I integrate the two by assigning a research paper that includes a rhetorical and semantic analysis of two or more conflicting sources on any subject of current public controversy such as those suggested in Appendix Two. The research paper is due in the thirteenth week of class; but students must choose their topic within the first two weeks, and at regularly spaced dates thereafter turn in and consult with me about a preliminary bibliography, preliminary outline, final outline, and first draft. They and I both bring questions and problems to class throughout the term pertaining to the stage they are at and to the rhetorical topics we are discussing; several read their first draft aloud in class at that stage, and the other students evaluate it according to the guidelines from the textbooks and checklists they have been studying.

The course begins with a discussion of evaluating sources of information in general and for purposes of research in particular--including primary sources (student-conducted interviews, polls, field work, experiments, etc.) as well as journalistic and public-relations

publications, government documents, scholarly and professional research. This is a good time to make students aware of the limitations in reliability of the mass-circulation newspapers, magazines, books, and TV or radio news broadcasts that are frequently accepted as sources for research papers in high school, and to review the first term's discussion of the different levels of literacy, rhetoric, and documentation between these publications, those addressed to a college-educated readership--such as Atlantic, New Republic, National Review, and American Spectator--and scholarly journals and books. As an exercise in using bibliographical guides, as soon as students have selected their research paper topic I ask them to try to find one source on the topic from each of the following guides: the library card catalogue, Books in Print, the government documents room, Newsbank or the index for a particular newspaper, Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, and a specialized periodical index or abstract in a scholarly or professional field such as Social Science Index or Public Affairs Information Bulletin. (This exercise also works well to make students realize how vastly greater a number of sources exist on every subject, and how much more disagreement among sources there is, than they have previously been aware of.)

Second Week: Fact, Opinion, and Evidence

In matters of controversy, college freshmen are accustomed to discourse--their own and others'--that simply states an opinion, though the speaker often mistakes that opinion for fact. Emphasis is placed throughout the second term on the necessity, for effective persuasion and reporting of research, of supporting opinions with reason and with evidence drawn from research sources. A frequent corollary of instruction that fails to distinguish adequately between fact and opinion is the imperative to students never to express their opinions in academic writing. I stress that there is nothing wrong with the expression of an opinion, that opinion or viewpoint is not necessarily the same thing as bias--a distinction developed later in the term--and that the expression of opinion is perfectly valid and necessary in most modes of discourse; an informed opinion, however, one supported with reason and evidence, is worth more than an uninformed one.

Throughout this term, then, the theme is pursued that a high degree of opinion or subjective interpretation of facts colors virtually all discourse, in academic fields --even the natural sciences--and, a fortiori, in journalistic media. (As an exercise in their journals, I ask students to clip a long news report from a newspaper or magazine and to go through it distinguishing statements

of fact from those of opinion or interpretation, then to evaluate the quality of documentation for the factual assertions.) Some teachers and textbooks of argumentation, following the conventions of formal debate, encourage students to assert a thesis unequivocally, as though it is indisputable fact: "The cause of inflation is wasteful government spending"; "Nuclear power is too dangerous a technology to be a feasible energy source." Such theses are then supported by reference to expert sources who often assert their factuality with a similar absence of qualifications. As an antidote to this kind of instruction, I try to show that the only incontestable fact in such issues as inflation or nuclear power is that there is no consensus on them even among the most knowledgeable authorities. (Students who assume that there is a single "body of expert opinion" are enlightened and amused when I read excerpts from the vituperative polemics between scholars in letters to the editor of journals like The New York Review of Books.) Concerning historical events like Watergate or the Vietnam War, what occurred is a matter of facts, but the human capacity to gain access to the total truth in such complex events is highly limited; all we have is a collection of the subjective viewpoints of the various participants and historians, which need to be fitted together like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle--though the picture of real-life events rarely can be put together totally.

If scholarly experts' knowledge is limited, college students' is all the more so. Consequently, I urge them to avoid a know-it-all tone in their writing, to set a modest scope of intentions in prewriting, and to acknowledge, in the introduction of their term papers and other writing throughout the course, their own and their sources' limited degree of certainty. I require them either to provide adequate support for every assertion that may be controversial or to attribute it to a source. By saying, "According to . . ." or, "In the opinion of . . .," students are taken off the hook for unsupported assertions in their own voice; their task subsequently becomes not to prove or disprove the case for nuclear power or the government's role in inflation but only to identify their sources' viewpoint and to evaluate the quality of support for that viewpoint, without drawing absolute conclusions on the issue.

Third Through Sixth Week: Logic and Argumentative Rhetoric

This unit begins with the basics of classical and modern rhetoric--inductive and deductive reasoning, topics and arrangement of arguments, ethos, refutation, logical fallacies, etc. A review of semantics here includes discussion of denotation and connotation applied to clear definitions and concrete language as essentials of sound argumentation and to the kinds of fallacious or deceptive reasoning involving abstraction, classification, equivocation, slanting (cleans and dirties), and euphemism. Textbook readings are supplemented with two of my heuristic guides, "Rhetoric: A Checklist for Analyzing Your Own and Others' Arguments" (Appendix Three) and "A Semantic Calculator for Bias in Rhetoric" (Appendix Four). Students use these two handouts as aids in structuring their short papers and the research paper and also try to find examples in current rhetoric of each of the items on them to include in their journals.

Here again, from the outset the class can discuss and find illustrations of the inclination of politicians and mass media toward fostering oversimplification, black-and-white thinking, stereotyping and labeling, emotional appeal, and other fallacies. The study of causal analysis is particularly relevant to the tendency of politicians and media to isolate and sensationalize current issues such as crime, racial conflicts, protest movements,

communism and revolutionary movements in foreign countries, without delving adequately into their historical and social causes.

The topics of selection and arrangement provide a common ground between literature, classical rhetoric, and general semantics; examples from all three disciplines can be drawn upon here, then applied to the rhetoric of politics and mass media, especially news reporting. In the daily in-class review of newspaper and TV news, and in the context of "playing up" and "playing down" on the semantic calculator for bias in rhetoric, students' attention is called to the ideological judgments implicit, first, in editors' selections of which news events are reported and which neglected, as well as in the prominence given different stories through headline size and page placement (or time allotment and sequence on TV and radio news), article length, emphasis in ordering from the lead paragraph to the end of the story, from the first page to continuation on back pages, and in the use of photos and captions. Another important aspect of selection and arrangement in news is the ideology of "frames," as analyzed by media critics such as Herbert Gans in Deciding What's News, Gaye Tuchman in Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality, and Todd Gitlin in The Whole World Is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left. These frames are the routinized, often

stereotypical patterns of classifying and labeling subjects of reportage that predetermine the "peg" for a report's genre, structure, and style, but that also tacitly incorporate value judgments on the subject. (Gitlin's book, for example, reconstructs the institutional decision-making process and generic preconceptions that led major national news media to cover the student protest movement in the sixties primarily in the genre of crime reportage, focusing on violent confrontation and destruction to the exclusion of the underlying issues and background events preceding the stage of violence, and selecting labels such as "civil disturbances" rather than "movements for justice and peace".)

An essential but very difficult skill to develop in relation to selection is critical awareness, not only of what evidence and arguments authors present, but of what they omit--the significant absences. For a short paper at this point in the term students analyze two opposing periodical articles on a topic like the Cold War or nuclear power, with an eye to evidence presented by one author that refutes or reveals a weakness in the other's arguments that the latter ignores or plays down. Application of the same approach, on a more extended scale, will comprise a major portion of the research paper.

Another noteworthy kind of significant absence is found in periodical book reviews. The most effective way for a

journal to denigrate a new book inimical to its editors' ideology is not by reviewing it negatively but by not reviewing or mentioning it at all. Many non-fiction books of obvious social significance are never reviewed in most mass-circulation magazines and newspapers while these journals habitually review mainly fiction and non-fiction that is trivial and ephemeral. Thus a journal's selection of books to review is a good indicator of both its taste-culture and literacy level and its ideological predispositions. To concretize these points, I ask students to make a comparative list in their journals of non-fiction books reviewed in several recent issues of The New York Review of Books, The New York Times Book Review, Time, The Progressive, The American Spectator, and the local newspapers and their book supplements. I also ask them to look up reviews that appeared (or didn't appear) in various journals at the time of publication of books that have subsequently become highly influential but that were largely ignored or denigrated originally, like Vance Packard's The Waste Makers, Paul Goodman's Growing Up Absurd, or Rachel Carson's The Silent Spring, and to evaluate each review in today's perspective as a measure of journals' biases.

Seventh Through Eighth Week: Modes of Deception and Doublespeak

A limitation of many conventional composition and argumentation textbooks is to regard fallacious reasoning mainly in terms of impersonal, formal reasoning and unintentional fallacies. A realistic approach to the rhetoric and semantics of contemporary public discourse necessitates a systematic study of modes of intentionally deceptive argumentation as well as of possible causes for and patterns of bias in one's sources of information and in oneself as a reader and writer. This entails, first, developing a taxonomy of deceptive rhetorical strategies and lines of argument beyond the conventional lists of logical fallacies (a part of my own course that I have still not fully formulated, so will not detail here) and, second, discussing the problematics of lying, propaganda, advertising and publicity, manipulation of statistics, and other forms of what has come to be known as public doublespeak.

In spite of widespread public agreement today with Orwell's dictum that modern politics are "a mass of lies, folly, hatred, and schizophrenia," scholars and textbook writers have until recently avoided the subject of lying in public discourse. Spurred by the growing "credibility gap" associated with politicians and corporations on such issues as the Vietnam War, Watergate, covert activities by American intelligence agencies ("spying" is a dirty, "intelligence" a clean; "covert activities" is a clean,

"internal subversion" a dirty), nuclear power, product safety, and industrial pollution, a growing body of literature on lying is now becoming available to scholars. Works I recommend to students are Sissela Bok's Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life, David Wise's The Politics of Lying, Noam Chomsky's "The Responsibility of Intellectuals," and the Spring 1975 issue of Salmagundi, "On Liars and Lying."

In class discussion, propaganda can be distinguished from lying in that, although propaganda sometimes entails lies, it more typically consists of half-truths, in the sense that it presents a deliberately one-sided, partisan viewpoint on any given issue, playing up all arguments favorable to one's own side and unfavorable to the other, suppressing all arguments unfavorable to one's own side and favorable to the other. It is useful in class to make a distinction that many students are not conscious of, between three definitions of propaganda: (1) the general propagation of any viewpoint, synonymous with the public dissemination of information, which may be done in a scrupulous, even-handed manner; (2) rhetoric that is unintentionally one-sided or slanted, motivated by the author's own, sincere beliefs; I term this "bias" to distinguish it from (1) and (3), the latter being deliberate one-sidedness, usually carried out by professionals who may or may not believe what they are saying but who do it

for pay or as a duty in a political or other organization. (To be sure, this definition frequently becomes indistinguishable from the second, or even the first, in the minds of professional propagandists, through rationalization to ease their conscience.) Usage of the word "propaganda," incidentally, is a prime illustration of the ethnocentrism of cleans and dirties: we always characterize information disseminated by our side (e.g., the Voice of America) by definition (1), while definition (3) is applied exclusively to the messages of the other side (e.g., Pravda). Students have been made quite aware that Communist governments use propaganda; the engineering of propaganda in the interests of American nationalism and capitalist ideology is a considerably less common subject of American public discourse. On the latter topic I refer students to Chomsky's The Political Economy of Human Rights and Alex Carey and Truda Korber's Propaganda and Democracy in America.

By definition (3) above, it is evident that most modern advertising and much professional public relations activity are forms of propaganda, in that their practitioners usually are paid to play up everything good about a product, service, candidate, or cause, and to conceal anything bad about it. (This is not such a truism as might be supposed for college students, many of whom have an ingenuous notion that working in advertising or PR

consists simply of a straightforward, unrestricted presentation of information--a notion reinforced by many pre-professional college courses in these fields.) This is not to deny that there is some honest advertising and PR, and I ask students to look for and analyze examples of them as well as of deceptive ones, in their journals. Nor is the line always clear between what is or is not propaganda or advertising. Were Shakespeare's history and other plays propaganda for the Tudor monarchy? Was Michelangelo serving as a public relations agent for Pope Julius in painting the Sistine Chapel? Such questions provide good material for class discussions and journal essays.

The rhetoric and semantics of advertising can easily become a course in itself, but in this survey it must be limited to a week or so of brief discussion of the following aspects. Students currently seem to be especially interested in and critical of subliminal techniques of advertising as exposed by Vance Packard in The Hidden Persuaders and Wilson Key's Subliminal Seduction and Media Sexploitation. They also respond energetically to a journal assignment of finding examples from the taxonomies of deceptive advertising techniques in Jeffrey Schrank's teacher's guide Deception Detection and its companion multi-media kit The Persuasion Box or Paul Stevens' "Weasel Words: God's Little Helpers" in I Can Sell You

Anything. If time allows for a couple of extra class periods, debate over advertising can and should be extended into larger issues like the long-range social effects and value of modern advertising, its function in the political economy of capitalism, whether positive features of that function outweigh the negative aspects of advertising, and, ultimately, whether the dependency of modern capitalism on massive and frequently inane and deceptive advertising calls the system itself into question. (For fuller description of such class discussions and readings, see my "Mass Culture, Political Consciousness, and English Studies," College English, April 1977, pp. 762-63.) Even if there is not time for such topics now, I encourage some students to write their research paper on one of them to be read aloud toward the end of the course.

Several other influential forms of advertising and PR should be brought briefly to students' attention and suggested for research paper topics. (1) The ever-increasing tendency for political candidates' campaigns to be keyed to TV and other media coverage and to be packaged like marketing promotions by advertising agencies, a phenomenon that has been studied in several useful books since Boorstin's The Image and Joe McGinnis's The Selling of the President 1968. (2) Similar media campaigns for special interests on election ballot propositions that are orchestrated by professional

agencies, which typically conceal their presence behind front organizations like "CARE" (Californians Against Regulatory Excess), created by out-of-state tobacco companies to defeat a proposition on the 1980 California ballot providing for no-smoking sections in restaurants. (3) Advertising and PR for ideologies or institutions rather than for specific products (Mobil Oil's corporate ads, for example, whose rhetoric is analyzed by J.R. Bennett, Dennis Jackson, and Leonard White in "Mobil Oil in the Land of King Sam the Avuncular," ETC., Fall 1980). Ideas for classroom exercises analyzing such ads are also found in Richard Ohmann's "Doublespeak and Ideology in Ads," in Teaching About Doublespeak (NCTE, 1976), William Lutz's "The American Economic System: The Gospel According to the Advertising Council" (College English, April 1977), and Sheila Harty's Hucksters in the Classroom: A Review of Industry Propaganda in Schools (Washington, D.C.: Center for Study of Responsive Law, 1979), which focuses on PR materials distributed to schools by corporations and trade associations. (4) Sections in newspapers that ostensibly contain editorial content but that are in effect ads or attention-getters for ads, as in travel and fashion features or restaurant reviews, which in some though not all newspapers are published as direct trade-offs for ads. (The influence of advertisers on the editorial and entertainment content of media in general should be brought

to students' attention as a factor for rhetorical analysis and for further study, in sources such as Eric Barnouw's Tube of Plenty and The Sponsor.) (5) News stories that directly reproduce public relations handouts. All modern news media must depend to some extent on press releases, but with controversial material, a line of responsible editing can be drawn between cases in which the editors check the veracity of the handout and add results of their own investigation, and cases where they reprint the original without question. In one famous instance, an anti-labor editorial distributed by a manufacturers' trade association was reprinted in hundreds of American newspapers word-for-word--down to a misprint in the original--in the papers' own editor's column. In our daily in-class review of a newspaper, and in students' journals, we look for examples of the above confusions of ads and PR handouts with news.

At this point of the course, discussion of the use and misuse of statistics, especially in the rhetoric of economic controversy, is in order. I frankly have never been able to devise a timetable to find enough class time to cover this topic adequately or to assign what would be perfect textbooks for it, Dennis Haack's recent Statistical Literacy: A Guide to Interpretation or Darrel Huff's earlier How To Lie With Statistics. In lieu of a full unit or course on the subject, one or two

class periods can be devoted simply to surveying illustrations of the fact that no area of public discourse is more inundated by propaganda and doublespeak, partisanship, rationalization of special interests, and general mystification. (As I write this, a TV commentator reports, "Economists now say that six percent unemployment in the United States is, in effect, full employment." We are not told the source of this information, the names of these economists, their ideological persuasion, or whether those of different persuasions dispute the assertion.)

Ninth Through Tenth Week: Causes and Patterns of Subjectivity, Partisanship, and Bias

The subjective, psychological factors that lead writers and readers into partisan or biased arguments are another critical aspect of argumentative rhetoric that is inadequately emphasized in most textbooks. I begin this unit with a discussion of the most common psychological blocks to critical thinking that students should watch for in their sources for their term paper and in themselves while reading and writing on these sources; these blocks include closed-mindedness and prejudice, the relativity of points of view, ethnocentrism and parochialism, rationalization and wishful thinking. (Despite its brevity and superficiality, Ray Kytle's Clear Thinking for Composition is the most useful textbook I know on these blocks.)

To place this unit in a literary framework, I preface it with lectures and printed excerpts on the relativity of individual point of view in authors such as Conrad, Proust, Gide, Woolf, Joyce, Faulkner, Dos Passos, and Doris Lessing, and on the themes of ethnocentrism, rationalization, and self-deception in Montaigne, Pascal, La Rochefoucauld, Moliere, Swift, Pope, Johnson, Voltaire, Twain, Mencken, Sartre, Baldwin, and Heller. The essential point is that many students have lived all their lives in a parochial circle of people who all have pretty much the same set of beliefs, so that they are inclined to

accept a culturally conditioned consensus of values as objective, uncontested truth. They need to be made aware that what they or their sources of information assume to be self-evident truths are often only the opinion or interpretation of what the truth is that is held by their particular social class, political ideology, religion, racial or ethnic group, nationality and geographical location, historical period, occupation, sex, age group, etc. Furthermore, we are all inclined to tailor our "objective" beliefs to the shape of our self-interest; consequently, we are susceptible to wishful thinking, rationalization, selective vision, and other logical fallacies in controversies where our interests are involved. (Cleans and dirties: "biased" is a word that always applies only to arguments favoring the other side; we instinctively label arguments that confirm our own biases as "impartial," "well-balanced," "judiciously supported with solid scholarship.") Among the most common areas for such rationalization are our financial interests (as long as a business one has money invested in is profitable, for example, most investors are loathe to admit that it might do anything unethical or illegal), our occupations, the moral character of our relatives or friends, our national chauvinism which leads us to assume the rectitude of the United States and its allies in international conflicts, and our partisanship to

capitalist political economy as opposed not only to communism but to democratic socialism. (As I make clear to the students at the beginning of the course, I draw examples for rhetorical and semantic criticism mainly from arguments favoring Americanism, capitalism, whites, males, and the middle class--not because I think these interests are more malevolent or deceptive than any others, but simply as compensation against the biases in their favor that dominate the particular cultural conditioning of most students at my and most other Middle-American colleges. I stress that partisans of other countries and ideologies are equally conditioned to rationalize their interests.)

All of these culturally conditioned opinions and rationalizations frequently become central to students' or sources' arguments as hidden premises in enthymemes, assumed to be universally agreed upon. In sound argumentation, however, they need to be explicitly identified as disputable assertions, and their validity needs to be adequately demonstrated in order for conclusions based on them to follow logically--essential tests for students to apply to their sources and their own arguments in the research paper.

While authorities used as sources, such as scholars, professional researchers or journalists, public officials, and business or labor executives can--or should--be expected to have a more informed viewpoint than students

on specialized subjects, students should be made aware that authorities are not immune from ideological partisanship and other modes of subjective bias including numerous forms of possible conflicts of interest. A politician's position on an issue may be influenced by the desire to appeal to a particular electoral constituency or by beholdenness to campaign contributors and other special interests. A journalist's report may similarly cater to a sectarian audience or simply be sensationalized to maximize TV ratings or sales of a newspaper, magazine, or book, or it may be tailored to accord with the interests of advertisers or the journalist's employer. A scholar may sensationalize to gain professional prominence. A researcher whose project is subsidized by a corporation, labor union, or government agency may be reluctant to reveal findings unfavorable to the sponsor; another researcher may have a conflict of interest resulting from outside employment or financial investments. A political scientist, economist, sociologist, or historian may be influenced by the possibility that his or her publications favoring powerful political interests may lead to a government appointment or political candidacy. Any source who is situated in a professional hierarchy such as a corporation or labor union, an agency of the government, military or police is apt to come under pressure to play up findings that will gain favor from

superiors and to play down findings disagreeable or detrimental to superiors or to the organization or profession in general--findings whose revelation might lead to reprisals against the source; thus it may happen that those at every level of a hierarchy will close ranks to cover up mistakes or misdeeds committed at any level--a phenomenon that might be termed the My Lai-Watergate Syndrome. Finally, any individual source, whether under hierarchical pressures or not, is subject to the nearly universal human trait of being reluctant to admit that one has been in error, and so may be tempted to deny the legitimacy of evidence contradicting the position he has committed himself to.

Questions of conflict of interest are extremely delicate, and the teacher needs to caution students against excesses of cynicism, reductionism, and the genetic fallacy. Students should approach these questions very tentatively, running them routinely through their mental bias-calculators for purely exploratory, heuristic purposes, as one set of factors among many. In their final, written analyses, they should only raise such questions against a source when they can find concrete evidence of their relevance or can deduce it plausibly from the circumstances. For example, my class discussed a letter to the editor of the San Luis Obispo newspaper presenting a highly emotional, one-sided argument defending

the safety of the nearby Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant and opposing reviews by citizens' groups. The author did not mention having any personal connection with the plant, but after we discussed what conflicts of interests could be involved and someone suggested that the author might be a plant employee, one student verified that the writer was indeed a contracting inspector at the plant; the class generally agreed that although this fact did not negate the intrinsic validity of the author's arguments, the letter would have been more honest and effective rhetorically if he had indicated his connection with the plant and balanced the potential conflicts of interest in his position against the benefits of his first-hand familiarity with the situation. Thus, even where evidence of conflict of interest is fairly strong, students should avoid ad hominem arguments and reductionistic attributions of the source's arguments to conflict of interest as the sole motivation for his or her position. On the other hand, a fairly strong dose of skepticism in such matters can be a valuable antidote to the tendency of American political, academic, and journalistic discourse to play down the prevalence of conflicts of interest in our society until one erupts into a major scandal.

The next point to be made is that every ideology--political, religious, etc., is predisposed toward its own distinct pattern of rhetoric that its conscious or

unconscious partisans tend to follow on virtually any subject they are reading, writing, or speaking about. Critical readers need to learn to identify and understand the various ideologies apt to be found in current sources of information (methods for doing this will be covered in the next two units of the course). Having done so, they can then to a large extent anticipate what underlying assumptions, lines of argument, rhetorical strategies, logical fallacies, and modes of semantic slanting to watch for in any partisan source. One may wish it were not so, but it can be predicted pretty certainly that an article on nuclear power in The Nation will not provide any information favorable to it, while one in National Review will not provide any that is unfavorable. (To prove these points I ask several students what their research paper topic is and the name of a journal or author and publisher of a book they are using as a source; even without having read the source I can usually project in some detail its general position on the issue, what arguments it uses, what information it plays up and what it excludes.)

This is not to say that partisan sources should be shunned. Indeed, a clear-cut, well-supported expression of a partisan position can be more valuable than a blandly non-partisan one (a point I return to in the next two units). Nor does partisanship in a source necessarily

go along with biased or deceptive reasoning. One must judge a partisan argument on the basis of how fully and fairly it represents the opposing position and demonstrates why its own is more reasonable. Some partisan authors or journals are highly admirable on this score (and I encourage students in their papers to cite such examples, not just fallacious or deceptive ones). Others, unfortunately, predictably repeat the same one-sided, doctrinaire line year after year, whatever the subject, and they are to be read, if at all, with one's bias calculator close at hand.

This approach can help prevent students from simply picking American Opinion or Mother Jones, a book published by Arlington House or Monthly Review Press, a report from American Enterprise Institute or the Institute for Policy Studies, off the library shelf to use as a source and quoting it as gospel, without a critical understanding of the sponsor's habitual viewpoint. (Again, this approach needs to be applied with some subtlety; it may take several years of observation, for example, to learn that Basic Books is the primary publisher of neoconservative authors, but that its list is not limited to them and even includes some marxists, or that Beacon Press and Seabury Books both specialize in scholarly political works encompassing left-liberal, marxist, and liberal-Christian viewpoints.) Following this procedure enables students to replace categorical assertions in their papers with

statements like, "Prominent conservative economist Milton Friedman, writing in National Review, a journal of conservative opinion, attributes our current inflationary problems to wasteful government spending and excessive regulation"; or, "Stanley Aronowitz, in an article published by The Nation, a left liberal-to-socialist journal, presents a marxist interpretation of recent inflation, attributing it to a combination of the depletion of economic resources by the Vietnam War and productive stagnation resulting from the concentration of industry in multinational corporations and the military sector." Students can then go on to explain how the source's general ideological viewpoint applies to the particular issue in question, to analyze the rhetorical/semantic patterns accordingly, and to balance the source's viewpoint against opposing ones. In this way they can get beyond the parochial mentality of those who read and listen only to sources that confirm their preconceptions while deluding themselves that these sources impartially present a full range of information.

To summarize this unit and the course to date, I reiterate that total objectivity is rarely possible or even desirable, and that subjectivity and the expression of partisan opinions or viewpoints are not in themselves necessarily signs of faulty reasoning. We can only aspire

toward true objectivity through realistic awareness of the subjective limitations in our own and others' vantage-point. In evaluating others' or our own rhetoric we should judge the effective writer or reader to be one who, lucidly recognizing her or his own predispositions, resists the temptations toward the stock, facile rhetorical patterns those predispositions are susceptible to, and who makes a compensatory effort against those patterns to produce a balanced, thoroughly supported reading response, written or spoken argument. Intrinsic to this process is attaining full understanding and communicating a fair account of opposing viewpoints in the process of refuting them, in the manner of argumentation developed by Carl Rogers and Anatol Rapaport. For their last writing assignment before the research paper, I ask students to take an issue in which they have a strong opinion on one side, and to write a paper making the fairest possible case for the other side.

Tenth Through Thirteenth Week: Political Rhetoric and Semantics

General rhetorical and semantic principles can now be applied directly to those areas of public discourse that are most prominent and influential in students' everyday lives--politics, news and entertainment media. I begin by asking the students to look up in one or more dictionaries the following terms: conservatism, liberalism, radicalism, right wing, left wing, fascism, capitalism, socialism, communism, marxism, patriotism, democracy, totalitarianism, freedom, and free enterprise. Students bring their different dictionaries to class and read aloud the multiple and varying definitions from one dictionary to another for each word, thereby learning that understanding these terms and using them accurately in spoken or written discourse is complicated not only by each dictionary's giving several meanings for each word but by differences among various dictionaries (and from one edition to another of the same dictionary--another nice lesson in historical parochiality). Furthermore, even the largest unabridged dictionary fails to cover the almost infinite number of senses in which liberal, conservative, socialist, communist, and marxist are used throughout the world, or the equally immense diversity of political factions which identify themselves with each of these ideologies. In America alone, a conservative may be a Burkean patrician, a Howard Hughes-type corporate capitalist, a Moral Majority populist, a Ku Klux

Klanner, a member of the Libertarian Party, etc., etc. And yet our mass media chronically use conservative either without any definition at all or as a simplistic label, as though it had one and only one meaning. Many Democratic and Republican Party politicians consciously evade any consistent definition of their ideology, in an unscrupulous attempt to woo the widest possible constituency; hence they almost inevitably must resort to doublespeak. And a strong case can be made that the failure of American foreign policy makers to distinguish between opposing communist and socialist or nationalist forces--or between opposing factions of communists--in other countries has led to fiascos like Vietnam, Chile, Iran, and El Salvador.

This dictionary exercise can point up another widespread semantic confusion in our public discourse, the false equation of political terms like democracy, freedom, justice, patriotism, and dictatorship, with words referring to economic systems--capitalism or free enterprise, socialism, and communism. One must again go beyond dictionary definitions to understand the problematic relation between these political and economic terms, for proponents of varying ideologies posit differing connections between, say, freedom and democracy on one hand and capitalism and socialism on the other. In order to grasp these conflicting interpretations, students need to expose themselves to the kind of systematic analysis of ideologies taught in

political science or political economy courses--and this is one of several points in this survey where discussion must be cut short by the teacher delineating what can be legitimately covered in a course in rhetoric and semantics and what needs to be pursued in other academic departments.

Further essential points about the semantics of these political and economic terms can be made in the following sequence. First, partisans of every political ideology are prone to select out and play up only the dictionary definitions of these words that are favorable to their cause and those unfavorable to the opposition. Thus communication between liberals, conservatives, and radicals, or advocates of capitalism and socialism, is obstructed because they are operating from different definitions and mental filters.

Second, these words are all highly loaded connotatively. Many people have little sense of any specific denotation of democracy, freedom, socialism, communism, marxism, or fascism, but simply have a "clean" or "dirty" conditioned response when they hear them. Moreover, positively charged words like patriotism, Americanism, or free enterprise are frequently used as though they denote universally accepted, absolute values, whereas in real life their value is limited and relative; they may be admirable in certain senses and situations but not in others. Industrial pollution, deceptive advertising, and

gross inequalities in wealth are all results of free enterprise; are they therefore socially desirable? Was the My Lai massacre an admirable expression of patriotism and Americanism? Could a Nazi German, a Viet Cong guerilla, an anti-American Iranian be patriotic, and is their patriotism admirable? (Cleans and Dirties: our side always has "ardent patriots"; the other side has "fanatic nationalists.") The careful writer or speaker, when defending such values, must discuss them in a specific context and delineate the limits of their desirability.

Third, the words left wing and right wing, liberal, conservative, moderate and radical are not only ambiguous abstractions but are extremely elastic; they will denote different entities in different societies and historical periods. One way of defining the right and left is in terms of forces committed to preserving the social status quo as opposed to forces favoring change; the problem, though, is that "the status quo" is not a fixed entity but varies from time to time and place to place. The USSR is generally identified as a radical left-wing country, but then are anti-communistic socialists and Russian or Polish dissidents who accuse the status quo, i.e., the Communist Party, of betraying socialist principles left-wing or right-wing, radicals or reactionaries? Furthermore, there is not always a consensus about what the status quo is in a particular place and time. Identifying

what social groups in the United States possess power, wealth, and status involves a strong subjectivity factor, since most of us are inclined to play down the power, wealth, and status of our own group and to magnify those of other groups. If students are going to use these terms in their writing or speaking, then they will need to present evidence establishing what the particular forces of the right and left are in the context being discussed.

The above problem of labeling the status quo in the USSR derives from complications created by the fact that in our time the right and left are defined not simply in terms of the status quo but in terms of oppositions between political ideologies ranging from fascist dictatorship on the far right to communist dictatorship on the far left--with democratic and other intermediate countries being pulled into varying degrees of alliances with the far right or left--and between the economic ideologies of capitalism on the right and socialism on the left, with the correlation of political democracy and freedom to these economic systems in any given country being variable and open to dispute. Writers need to work toward concrete working definitions of the terminology of right and left by acknowledging all these variables and relating them to specific sets of issues on which the right and left tend to take opposing positions, such as wealth and poverty, class structure and other social hierarchies, management

vs. labor, business vs. consumers and environmentalists; competition vs. cooperation on the individual and international level, race and gender relations, and the proper function of government in the social and economic realms. Yet another variable is the association of liberal and conservative with open-minded or permissive vs. orthodox or staid moral values in religion, sex, etc., and the relation of these values to political and economic ideologies. It should be pointed out to the class that there is a certain measure of subjectivity involved even in an impartial attempt to define all these variables and points of opposition. The conservative may argue that the interests of business are not opposed to those of labor, consumers, or environmentalists, as the left claims; the leftist may argue that contemporary right-wing interests do not in practice promote individualism or traditional morality, as conservatives claim. This point is a good illustration of the axiom that whoever controls definitions gains the upper hand in argumentation.

The final point to be made in this unit is that the way one uses the terminology of right and left is apt to be relative to one's own political vantagepoint. During the Portuguese revolution in 1975, United Press International referred to the "left-of-center Popular Democrats," while the independent socialist International Bulletin spoke of the "center-right Popular Democratic party,"

and People's World (West Coast newspaper of the Communist Party U.S.A.) termed the same party the "rightist Popular Democrats." This relativity factor can be used to explain the paradox of how the Nixon-Agnew administration could use the same arguments as evidence of left-wing bias in the Eastern news media that New Left radicals used as evidence of right-wing bias; both were describing the same characteristics in the media, but simply applying different labels based on their relative viewpoints.

The accurate writer needs to key these political terms to a spectrum of positions from far right to far left in the United States and the rest of the world, incorporating all of the above senses of right and left (see Appendix Five). Rather than speaking of "the liberal New York Times," one should explain and document the sense and degree of liberalism referred to. "Liberal" in relation to what other media? One might clarify the label by placing the Times to the left of Time but to the right of The New York Review of Books. The whole range of American news media--along with politicians and parties, individual journalists and scholars, and even figures in popular entertainment (like John Wayne and Jane Fonda, Steve Canyon and Doonesbury, Debbie Boone and Joan Baez, "Wonder Woman" and "Lou Grant")--can be placed on this spectrum in such a precise way that their political identity can be agreed on to a large extent by those of every

ideological persuasion. (In distributing Appendix Five to students I make it clear that this is a very general overview that necessarily involves oversimplifications and some debatable placements, and that this schema needs regular updating due to shifts in the positions of countries, individual politicians, writers and periodicals. Journals especially frequently shift their positions without explicitly announcing it, so these shifts must be carefully watched for. For example, Newsweek and The Washington Post (under joint ownership) and The New York Times moved to the left during the Vietnam and Watergate years but back to the right in the seventies, especially on foreign affairs. Commentary, Harper's, The New Republic, and American Scholar, all formerly center-to-left-liberal, have become associated in the past decade with "neoconservative" ideology, while The Nation and Progressive have moved somewhat left and Mother Jones has replaced Ramparts as a journal of left-liberal-to-socialist muckraking.)

Extending the right-to-left spectrum worldwide serves to call students' attention to the parochially limited span of ideology represented by the poles of the Republican and Democratic parties and of "conservatism" and "liberalism" that define the boundaries of most American political, journalistic, scholarly, and cultural discourse. Factions and positions that are considered liberal in the United

States, for example, usually stay well within the limits of capitalist ideology, thus are considerably to the right of the labor, democratic-socialist, and communist parties with large constituencies in most other democratic countries today. (A politician or position labeled "moderate" in the United States is considered right-wing from today's European perspective, while many American "radicals" would be "moderates" in Europe. Similarly, many "ultra-conservatives" in American terminology appear "moderate" in comparison to fascistic countries.) Therefore, in order to expose themselves to a full range of ideological viewpoints, students need to seek out sources excluded from the mainstream of American discourse, though such sources may be hard to find in many communities. Probably the most prominent of these ideologies in a worldwide perspective are socialism and libertarian conservatism (both of which favor political democracy and freedom), communism and fascism (both of which are opposed to democracy and freedom but are nonetheless strong presences in today's world and therefore need to be studied and understood through their own spokespeople--even though these ideologies have a rather notorious record of doublespeak--and not just through the distorting filters of second-hand accounts).

It would not, of course, be either possible or justifiable within the limits of this unit or class to try

to extend the above survey of political semantics into a fully articulated analysis of political and economic ideologies, a definitively filled-out nationwide or world-wide spectrum of who stands where in relation to these ideologies, or an endorsement of one particular ideology. Students can learn here, though, that it is possible, and necessary for them as critically conscious citizens, to develop a comprehensive understanding of political and economic ideologies and a coherent position themselves that encompasses all the complexities and variables discussed above--an ongoing endeavor that they must pursue throughout the rest of their education in and out of school.

Some students--and teachers--question the value of attempting to make such a comprehensive ideological synthesis or to define one's own position so precisely. They are justifiably wary of oversimplification, labeling, either-or thinking, and the inflexibility of the doctrinaire ideologue. There are even semanticists such as Stuart Chase who deny the validity of all political labels. To be sure, there are some situations, such as current Middle Eastern politics, where the ideological issues are so tangled as to defy analysis in terms of "left" and "right." And one can quite reasonably hold a liberal position on one issue, a conservative one on another, a socialistic one on another, and a libertarian one on yet

another. Such an attitude, however, at least implies that each of these positions is definable. Moreover, one can hold different positions on various specific issues for lucid reasons whose totality does form a consistent, defensible philosophy. What is not valid is to use these justifications to rationalize evading the formation of any clearly defined pattern of beliefs, to obscure one's own or others' true conscious or unconscious partisanship, or to fail to interpret a given situation in terms of conflicting ideologies when it can only be accurately assessed by doing so. (For example, opinion on nuclear power divides pretty consistently along right-left lines, although most politicians and news media have played down this fact; one cannot, however, adequately understand the issue without placing it in this ideological context.) It is the latter patterns, not doctrinaire sectarianism, that are most characteristic of contemporary American discourse and that are responsible in large part for the confusion and drift in our public discourse and the resulting national atmosphere of ideological paralysis.

In most other modern democracies there are more than two major political parties (or, as in England, sharper differences between the two major ones); parties, individual politicians, and media of news and opinion tend to have a more clearly defined constituency than in the United States. In the bipartite division of American politics,

the Republican and Democratic parties, both of which contain conservative and liberal factions--and which also tend to absorb any potential movements to the far right or left--try to appeal to a much more diffuse constituency, as do most mass media. Sound arguments can be made for the advantages of this system, but it also has its disadvantages. The attempt by politicians or media to be all things to all people can lead to, or become a cover for, vagueness, equivocation, inconsistencies and self-contradictions. Governor Jerry Brown of California claims he follows "the canoe theory" of political rhetoric: "Paddle for a while on the right, then for a while on the left." Many major politicians are not even as clear as Brown about their vagaries, but simply calculate the line they think will "sell" at any moment on any issue. In this state, citizens have little certainty of what they are getting when they vote for a candidate or party, and if they are disappointed by those they have elected, they have no clearer alternatives to turn to. Moreover, the general vagueness both in the rhetoric of politicians and the minds of the electorate may enable politicians in practice to favor particular constituencies or special interests without the voters perceiving the pattern of partisanship. (Among John Mitchell's gems of wisdom as campaign manager for Richard Nixon was, "Watch what we do, not what we say.")

Similarly, the professed ideological neutrality or balance characteristic of television network and local news, most newspapers, newsmagazines and journalistic books can mask either self-contradictions or covert partisanship--as opposed to a consistent, openly partisan position that is justified through reasoned argument, as is characteristic, for instance, of Commentary or Dissent. (World Press Review, which summarizes articles from foreign newspapers and magazines, identifies each of those journals' political ideology or party affiliation. It is remarkable that Americans are able to identify the partisanship of media in every other country but our own. Either American media are somehow miraculously exempt from partisanship, or else we must be deluding ourselves to believe this.) Finally, the pose of neutrality tends to obscure the fact that the range of views presented in the name of balance is limited to positions within the American liberal-to-conservative, Republican-Democratic consensus, so that ideologies outside that range, most notably libertarianism and socialism, rarely are allowed access in media to air either their general position or viewpoints on specific issues.

One valuable kind of alternative medium is exemplified by a journal called Skeptic, each issue of which presents a range of opposing, clearly identified ideological viewpoints written by prominent spokespeople for each view, on

a single topic of current controversy. Skeptic unfortunately ceased publication a few years ago--apparently because of lack of public conditioning to accept such a diversity of viewpoints--but back issues remain a very useful resource; my students often are able to derive all their sources for the research paper from a single issue.

The same criticisms of American political discourse and mass media are frequently applicable to college courses and to authors of academic books and articles. Since the 1960s a large body of criticism has appeared challenging the claims of "value free," ideologically neutral scholarship prevalent in American social sciences and humanities. According to this line of argument, such scholarship is not truly value free when it assumes a consensus of opinion on subjects that in fact are open to differing partisan interpretations, when it fails to identify tacitly partisan positions in authors, or when it limits its judgments of what is ideologically respectable academic discourse to within the American liberal-conservative consensus; such scholarship becomes inadvertently partisan itself in validating the status quo by ignoring viewpoints that challenge it. This unit of the course, then, enables students themselves to start identifying these implicit or explicit ideological implications in source material. Such identifications can also be incorporated into textbooks; one such model in

a social science text is Is America Possible?: Social Problems from Conservative, Liberal and Socialist Perspectives, edited by Henry Etzkowitz (St. Paul: West Publishing Co., 1974), which provides another excellent collection of sources for the research paper. The same kind of identifications might feasibly be built into English textbooks as part of the apparatus for rhetorical analysis; they would be quite useful in a book like The Borzoi Reader, which in fact presents a diversity of ideological viewpoints on social, political, and cultural issues but does not identify them as such or place them in relation to one another. The only such textbooks I know of directly pertinent to English studies are Robert Cirino's Power to Persuade: Mass Media and the News (New York: Bantam, 1974) and We're Being More Than Entertained; the latter book is introduced in this unit of the course and becomes the main text for the following unit.

Fourteenth Through Fifteenth Week: Rhetorical/Semantic/Political Analysis of Mass Media

The students have now turned in the final version of their research paper. The last two weeks of class are devoted to further application of the rhetorical/semantic/political analysis schemas to current news and cultural media. The textbook here is Robert Cirino's short and simple but quite useful book We're Being More Than Entertained. Cirino presents a similar approach to that outlined in my previous unit, first defining the basic beliefs of conservative, liberal, libertarian, and socialist ideologies and outlining the positions of each on the most prominent issues of current controversy, then analyzing examples of newspapers and magazines, newscasts, sports reporting, TV entertainment programs, films, popular songs and top-forty radio for explicit or implicit expressions of these ideologies. (Although Cirino shows examples of bias toward all four viewpoints, he makes a case that the over-all bias of American cultural media is weighted toward conservatism because most media are owned by large corporations, supported by corporate advertising, and devoted to maximizing profits through circulation and advertising, and because they are consequently inclined to divert rather than inform, and to avoid material that seriously threatens the sociopolitical status quo. Because of Cirino's own admitted subjectivity, I refer in class to Ben Stein's

The View From Sunset Boulevard and Edith Efron's The News Twisters, both of which find a predominantly left-wing bias in American media; I have earlier encouraged some students to write their research papers on this topic, using Cirino and Stein or Efron as their sources, so these students can read their papers in class during this unit.)

In addition to the regular daily discussion of newspapers and other media, for one class period I assign each student to monitor a different news medium for a single day--one of the three TV network newscasts, local TV and radio news, PBS, Pacifica Radio, and the local newspapers--then we compare their reports in class for the ideological viewpoints reflected in the different selections and presentations of stories.

For a short paper I ask the students to read a complete issue of a weekly, biweekly, or monthly magazine of news, opinion, or entertainment (Reader's Digest, Playboy, Cosmopolitan, People, etc.) and to trace the pattern of ideological views both in editorial content and advertising. I give them the choice of reviewing either a current magazine or one from twenty to forty years ago in the library back files. The latter choice provides marvelous revelations of historical parochiality and shifting social and political values; students are invariably struck, for example, by the minute depiction of or concern with racial minorities (and, when they--and

women--are depicted, by the stereotyped image of them) in Life, Reader's Digest, Saturday Evening Post, and the women's magazines before the 1950's.

For the final, short paper, students do another analysis of a TV entertainment or sports program, movie, popular novel or short story, song or pop album, similar to the critical paper at the end of the first term, but now incorporating rhetorical/semantic/political analysis. What students frequently find in analyzing both news and entertainment media (except in those that have a clearly defined editorial position, like In These Times, Commentary, Pacifica Radio, or Christian media) is a mixture of ideological messages that, as Cirino argues, does not represent a cogent balance of viewpoints but rather self-contradiction and mutual cancellation. For instance, in Playboy and Penthouse, the political reportage (as for example in exposes of abuses by conservative government intelligence agencies) and cultural reviews tend to be liberal, but are cancelled out by the images in the pictorials and fiction of women as sex objects and as prestigious commodities to be possessed by affluent male readers along with the expensive products in the advertisements--messages conveying a conservative validation of capitalistic production, consumption, and class relations. Similarly, The New Yorker will feature an expose on poverty in America or the inhumane conditions

in prisons with a left-liberal message, but surround them by ads for expensive jewelry and other luxury items.

Perhaps a cogent message can finally be derived from these contradictions, but it is one that is complexly coded and possibly not directly intended by the editors. In terms of audience, the implied reader of these journals is an upper-class or upper-middle-class businessperson (businessman in the case of Playboy or Penthouse) or professional with middlebrow-to-highbrow tastes but with liberal concerns over social injustice. Thus the ultimate, implicit message is that the capitalistic economic system, with its attendant disparities in wealth and class structure and its fostering of the consumption of luxury commodities by the upper classes, is basically a satisfactory one, but that there may occur within it inequities and injustices that need to be reformed, and that enlightened members of the upper classes are responsible for, and can be entrusted with, pressing for these reforms. In contrast to this liberal position (whose ambiguity opponents would be apt to attribute to the equivocations intrinsic to liberal ideology), a consistently conservative journal would probably avoid the blatant sexism of Playboy and Penthouse, not out of economic or feminist principles but out of distaste for licentious morality; it might justify abuses by intelligence agencies on the grounds of defense of national security or preservation of social

stability, and might attribute poverty and stark prison conditions to the personal inadequacies of poor people or criminals, who do not merit the solicitude of the public or government, and might accuse the media who play up these conditions of sensationalism and pandering to leftist sentimentality. A libertarian journal would not itself exploit women as do Playboy and Penthouse, but might defend those journals on the grounds that if sufficient numbers of readers did not choose to buy them, they would not exist; it might attribute abuses by intelligence agencies to the excessive power of government in America, and argue that poverty and poor prison conditions result from government interference with a free market economy. A socialist journal would abjure sexist portrayals of women as an excrescence of capitalistic patriarchy and commodity fetishism; it might attribute abuses by intelligence agencies to the inevitable control of government by, and in the interests of, the ruling class under capitalism, and interpret poverty and prison conditions in terms of capitalistic social inequities and oppression of the working class, while rejecting the liberal belief that such conditions can be effectively ameliorated by piecemeal reforms, especially as administered by members of the upper classes.

In summing up this unit, and the complete course, I caution students against drawing the conclusion that a

desirable alternative to the confusion of messages in American politics, news and cultural media is discourse that follows a doctrinaire party line, in the manner of Soviet commissars dictating the "correct" position on every subject from biology to art. The point of this mode of analysis is, rather, to enable each individual to attain a coherent understanding of ideological positions in order to identify any particular one--or any mixture of them--and to seek out opposing ones. The foregoing analysis of Playboy, Penthouse, and The New Yorker, for instance, would enable students to determine whether they found the mixture of messages in those journals to represent a viable ideology or an equivocal one; they might in the latter case be prompted to expose themselves regularly to journals with more consistently liberal, conservative, libertarian, or socialist positions. Such cogent judgments, however, can never be made unless students first learn to identify underlying ideological messages by a method such as that outlined here. And not until large numbers of American citizens learn to make this kind of judgment can sufficient public pressure be created to bring about a change toward nationally-accessible modes of American political, journalistic, cultural, and academic discourse that express more consistent positions, include a wider range of ideologies, and allow for more dialogue and debate between opposing

viewpoints--in place of present modes and media that produce a hodgepodge of contradictory messages in the name of "neutrality" and "balance." Cirino proposes a national system of TV networks, journalistic and other cultural media made up of organs explicitly representing one viewpoint: liberal, conservative, libertarian, or socialist, to be financed in part by taxes on the commercial media, which would then be free to pursue their profit-maximizing policies and corporate ideological interests without being burdened by the responsibility and expense of providing in-depth news and other public information.[10] A class debate over Cirino's proposal and other alternatives suggested by students makes a fitting conclusion to the course.

POSTSCRIPT

There has been a hidden agenda throughout this course description. The majority of students who have taken one version or another of the course as it has evolved over the years have affirmed in their anonymous course evaluations that, in spite of some initial bewilderment over departures from what they had previously considered "English," by the end of the course they were not only persuaded that everything therein was indeed a legitimate aspect of English, but they had a much richer conception of the meaning and value of English studies. They have also expressed their appreciation for information gained that no other course in any department had ever provided them. However, readers of this course description who have had the stamina to make it all the way through its daunting length may very likely conclude that there is too vast a range of material here to cover in a single, freshman-level course, even though the course encompasses this range in a sensible, coherent sequence. From these facts I hope the conclusion will follow logically that the material covered here warrants further development in English courses beyond the level of freshman composition, and that space should be made for them in English

undergraduate programs and--as preparation for teaching them--in graduate programs.

I have in fact taught two sophomore-level spin-offs: one on the rhetoric and semantics of politics, news media, and advertising, and one on the rhetoric and semantics of mass entertainment media, with emphasis on their political implications (Appendix Six is the syllabus for the latter course). I am developing a similar course on the rhetoric and semantics of economics, which will, like the other two, include fiction and other literary sources.

Such an expansion in the concept of English studies could make a substantial contribution toward the regeneration of our profession, as well as at least a modest contribution toward the regeneration of American public discourse and civic consciousness.

ENDNOTES

[1]The Philosophy of Composition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), pp. 87-89, 140-43.

[2]"Mass Culture, Political Consciousness, and English Studies: An Introduction," College English 38, No. 8 (April 1977), p. 754.

[3]Shaughnessy, Errors and Expectations (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977). See especially the chapters "Vocabulary" and "Beyond the Sentence."

Lunsford, "The Content of Basic Writers' Essays," College Composition and Communication XXXI, No. 3 (October 1980), pp. 278-90.

Bernstein, Class, Codes and Control (New York: Schocken Books, 1975).

A thorough account of Kohlberg's work is found in Richard H. Hersh et al., Promoting Moral Growth: From Piaget to Kohlberg (New York: Longman, 1979).

[4]I would like to acknowledge my debt to one such textbook in particular--Charles Muscatine and Marlene Griffin's Borzoi College Reader. My course has evolved into its present shape largely as a consequence of using the first two editions of this reader in my early years

of teaching freshman composition. The influence of its integration of readings expressing the political concerns of the sixties with rhetorical and semantic principles is reflected in many of my allusions throughout the course plan.

[5]I use the word "politics" and "political" henceforth as shorthand for the whole complex I am discussing of politics, economics, other social sciences, plus news, entertainment, and advertising media.

[6]College English 41, No. 1 (September 1979), pp. 38-46.

[7]W. Ross Winterowd, Contemporary Rhetoric: A Conceptual Background With Readings (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1975), pp. 225-34.

[8]Boston: South End Press, 1979.

[9]The Irrelevant English Teacher (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1972), p. 26.

[10]Another version of Cirino's proposed system is presented in "An Alternative American Communications System," College English 38, No. 8 (April 1977), pp. 802-10.

APPENDIX ONE

CURRENT GENERAL PERIODICALS

A partial list, intended to supplement, not replace, the more accessible, mass circulation newspapers and magazines, most of which have a center-conservative to center-liberal orientation.

American Scholar	Quarterly	Left-conservative
American Opinion	Monthly	Right-conservative (John Birch Society)
American Spectator	Monthly	Center-to-left conservative
Atlantic Monthly	Monthly	Center-liberal
Barron's	Weekly	Center-conservative
Commentary	Monthly	Center-to-left-conservative
Commonweal	Bi-weekly	Left-liberal Catholic
Conservative Digest	Monthly	Center-conservative
Consumer Reports	Monthly	Center-liberal (Consumers' Union)
Daedalus	Quarterly	Center-liberal
Dissent	Bi-monthly	Socialist to center-liberal
Esquire	Bi-weekly	Right-liberal
Ebony	Monthly	Center-liberal
Foreign Affairs	Quarterly	Center-conservative to right-liberal
The Guardian	Weekly	Socialist
Harper's	Monthly	Center-liberal to left-conservative

Human Events	Weekly	Center-conservative
In These Times	Bi-weekly	Socialist
Inquiry	Bi-weekly	Liberal-to-conservative-libertarian
The Militant	Weekly	Socialist (Socialist Workers' Party)
Modern Age	Quarterly	Center-conservative
Mother Jones	Monthly	Socialist to left-liberal
Ms.	Monthly	Center-to-left-liberal
The Nation	Weekly	Socialist to left-liberal
National Observer	Weekly	Left-conservative
National Review	Bi-weekly	Center-conservative
New Guard	Weekly	Center-conservative
New Leader	Bi-weekly	Center-liberal to left-conservative
New Politics	Quarterly	Socialist
New Republic	Weekly	Right-liberal to left-conservative
New York Review of Books	Bi-weekly	Left-liberal
New York Sunday Times	Weekly	Center-liberal to left-conservative
New Yorker	Weekly	Left-to-center-liberal
Partisan Review	Quarterly	Left-liberal
People's World	Weekly	Communist (Communist Party USA, West Coast)
Progressive	Monthly	Socialist to left-liberal
Public Interest	Quarterly	Left-to-center-conservative
Public Opinion	Monthly	Center-conservative

Radical America	Bi-monthly	Socialist
Reason	Monthly	Conservative libertarian
Rolling Stone	Bi-weekly	Center-liberal
Social Policy	Bi-monthly	Left-liberal
Socialist Review	Quarterly	Socialist
The Black Scholar	Quarterly	Socialist
Village Voice	Weekly	Left-liberal
Washington Monthly	Monthly	Center-liberal to left-conservative
Weekly People	Weekly	Socialist (Socialist Labor Party)
Working Papers for a New Society	Quarterly	Socialist
World Press Review		Digest of diverse foreign viewpoints

APPENDIX TWO

SUGGESTIONS FOR RESEARCH PAPER TOPIC

Some of these are broad topics, which you'll want to narrow down.

Presidential campaigns (subtopics: third parties, media political campaigning, the primary system)

The draft; drafting women

Nuclear power (subtopics: Three Mile Island, Diablo Canyon, radiation and other health hazards, storage of wastes, risk analysis)

Alternate energy sources and policies

Solar power

Toxic chemicals

The economy (subtopics: inflation, recession, tax policy, private vs. public spending, Proposition 13; welfare; distribution of wealth in U.S.)

Iran

Afghanistan

The Cuban refugees

Cambodia and/or Vietnam

The Middle East; African politics; Central and Latin American politics

The Equal Rights Amendment

Gay liberation

Marriage and the family

The Cold War and/or nuclear arms race

The MX missile; the neutron bomb

Police violence

Affirmative action

Racism in U.S.; busing

Crime in U.S.; white-collar crime; prisons, capital punishment; gun control

Abortion

Watergate; Richard Nixon

CIA and/or FBI abuses of power

Food additives and preservatives

Sugar

Agriculture: the 160-acre limitation

Back to basics in education

IQ testing

Mass media: bias in news reporting or in TV entertainment; the influence of TV on sports

Women in sports

The commercialization of sports

The effect of TV on children; advertising on children's TV

Deception in advertising or marketing

APPENDIX THREE

RHETORIC: A CHECKLIST FOR ANALYZING YOUR OWN AND OTHERS' ARGUMENTS

1. When you are expressing your views on a subject, ask yourself how extensive your knowledge of it is, what the sources of that knowledge are, and what restrictions there might be in your vantage point. When you are studying a writer on the subject (or when he cites an authority on it), try to ascertain what his qualifications are on this particular subject. What is his social and political vantage point? Is the newspaper, magazine, or book publishing house he is writing for a reputable one? What is its usual slant?

2. What selfish motives or vested interests might be coloring the author's arguments? Who is likely to gain and who to lose from the policy he is advocating?

3. Are you (or the author) indulging in wishful thinking, believing something merely because it is what you would <u>like</u> to believe? In other words, are you distinguishing <u>what</u> is personally advantageous or disadvantageous for you from what you would objectively consider just or unjust?

4. Are the actions of the author (or those he is supporting) consistent with his professed position, or is he saying one thing while doing another?

5. Are all of his "facts" correct? Any used misleadingly?

6. Does he make it clear, either by explicit definition or by context, in exactly what sense he is using any controversial or ambiguous words?

7. Any unjustifiable emotional appeal through empty "conditioned response" words, euphemisms, name-calling, innuendo, or sentimentality?

8. Are his generalizations and assertions of opinion--especially those that are disputable or central to his argument--adequately qualified and supported by reasoning, evidence, or examples?

9. Are the limits of his position defined or are they vulnerable to being pushed to absurd logical consequences (reduction to absurdity)? In other words, does he indicate where the line must be drawn?

10. Are all of his analogies and equations valid?

11. Is the other side represented accurately? What arguments have been left out, or facts suppressed, that might counter his (or your) arguments? Has he (or have you) anticipated objections to his (or your) position, and tried to answer them?

12. Is he using selective vision or a double standard in evaluating his own position against his opponents'? Are there faults on his side that correspond to the faults he has pointed out in the opposing position? In other words, is he fairly balancing all the evidence and arguments of one side against those of the other, giving each side's accurate weight and evaluating them in accurate proportion to each other?

13. Any faulty causal analyses? Does he view any actions as causes that may really be effects or reactions? Any post hoc reasoning--that is, when he asserts that something has happened because of something else, might it be true that the second happened irrespective of, or even in spite of, the first? Has he reduced a probable multiplicity of causes to one?

14. Other logical fallacies, especially begging the question, non sequitur conclusions, either-or thinking or false dilemmas?

15. Theory vs. practice: Are his theoretical proposals practicable and his abstract principles consistent with empirical facts and probabilities? Are his empirical assertions based on adequate first-hand witness to the situation in question?

16. When he argues that a course of action has been unsuccessful because it has been carried too far, might the opposite be true--that it has been unsuccessful because it has not been carried far enough (or vice versa)?

APPENDIX FOUR

A SEMANTIC CALCULATOR FOR BIAS IN RHETORIC*

1. What is the author's vantagepoint, in terms of social class, wealth, occupation, ethnic group, political ideology, educational level, age, sex (male or female), etc.? Is that vantagepoint apt to color her/his attitudes on the issue under discussion? Does she/he have anything personally to gain from the position she/he is arguing for?

2. What organized financial, political, ethnic, or other interests are backing the advocated position? Who stands to profit financially, politically, or otherwise from it?

3. Once you have determined the author's vantagepoint and/or the special interests being favored, look for signs of ethnocentricity, wishful thinking, and other blocks to clear thinking, as well as the rhetorical fallacies of one-sidedness, selective vision, or a double standard.

4. Look for the following semantic patterns reflecting the biases in No. 3:

   a. Playing up: (1) arguments favorable to his/her side,
      (2) arguments unfavorable to the other side.

   b. Playing down (or suppressing altogether):
      (1) arguments unfavorable to her/his side,
      (2) arguments favorable to the other side.

   c. Applying "clean" words (ones with positive connotation) to her/his side;
      Applying "dirty" words (ones with negative connotations) to the other.

   d. Assuming that the representatives of his/her side are trustworthy, truthful, and have no selfish motives, while assuming the opposite of the other side.

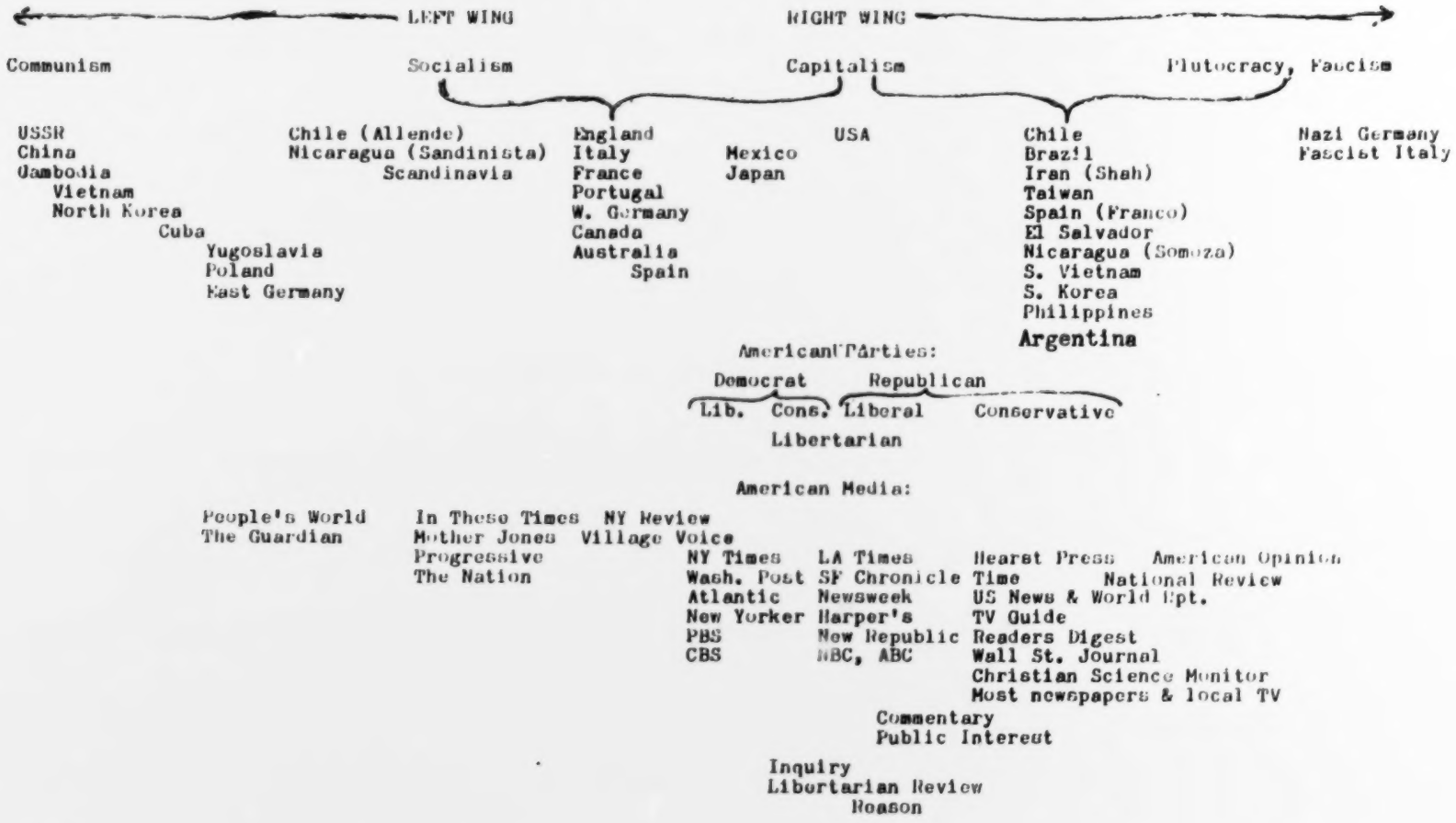
*This guide derives from Hugh Rank's "Intensify-Downplay" schema.

5. If you don't find strong signs of the above biases, that's a pretty good indication that the argument is a credible one.

6. If there is a large amount of one-sided rhetoric and semantic bias, that's a pretty good sign that the writer is not a very credible source. However, finding signs of the above biases does not in itself prove that the writer's arguments are fallacious. Don't fall into the ad hominem ("to the man") fallacy--evading the issue by attacking the character of the writer or speaker without refuting the substance of the argument itself. What the writer says may or may not be factual, regardless of the semantic biases. The point is not to let yourself be swayed by words alone, especially when you are inclined to wishful thinking on one side of the subject yourself. When you find these biases in other writers, or in yourself, that is a sign that you need to be extra careful to check the facts out with a variety of other sources and to find out what the arguments are on the other side of the issue. Finally, don't waste time questioning every argument; question only those where you think it is likely that there is a particular opposing viewpoint not being given a fair hearing, and don't pursue the issue much further unless you can find a reliable source expressing that viewpoint.

APPENDIX FIVE

POLITICAL SPECTRUM



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APPENDIX SIX

Reprinted from Mark Gordon and Jack Nachbar, Currents of Warm Life: Popular Culture in American Higher Education, Bowling Green: Popular Press, 1980.

Humanities 270
Popular Culture and Political Consciousness
(3 credits—10 Week Quarter)

Introduction

This course was first offered in winter quarter, 1979, as a section of a variable-content, sophomore-level humanities course, "Contemporary Ideas," which students can take as one means of fulfilling a university humanities requirement. This was the first course I had taught explicitly in popular culture, although for several years I had been incorporating elements of this course in my composition and semantics classes and had edited an issue of *College English* on "Mass Culture, Political Consciousness, and English Studies" in April 1977. About forty students enrolled; the course was well received by both students and administration, and present plans are to repeat it at least once a year. The following year I added a second Humanities 270, "The Semantics of Contemporary Public Discourse," which was a sequel to this course in its specific emphasis on the semantic dimensions of news reporting, advertising, and mass-mediated popular entertainment.

Popular (or mass) culture is perhaps the most influential socializing force in the United States today. Its critics assert that it is also among the most powerful agencies for political indoctrination and social control. Despite its all-pervasive presence in our collective and individual lives, relatively little academic study has been devoted to the influence of popular culture and mass media on political consciousness, largely because such study does not fit neatly in any one conventional academic department. This course, then, is an interdisciplinary approach to the humanistic aspects of the relations between mass culture and mass consciousness.

Outline of Course

Class sessions combine lecture and discussion, along with some monitoring of records and TV and application of theoretical perspectives to current films, TV shows, etc.

The following topics are considered, not necessarily in this order, and with a good deal of overlap among them.

1) Popular versus mass culture.

2) Mass culture and mass society.

3) Culture and social class; the relation between taste cultures (highbrow, middlebrow, lowbrow), socioeconomic class, and political ideology in the producers and audience of popular culture as well as in its subject matter.

4) The relation of the world portrayed in popular culture to social reality and real-life values and priorities. Images in mass media of various social classes, women and minorities, government and politicians, the

military and police, professions and occupations, science and technology.

5) The mind-numbing, pacifying effects of TV and other mass media.

6) Political ideology in popular culture, explicit or implicit attitudes toward:

Capitalism, socialism, communism, fascism, conservativism, liberalism, radicalism;
Wealth and poverty, social inequality, status quo vs change;
Sociopolitical power and authority, the State;
Business vs. labor, environmental issues;
Nationalism and war,
Competition vs. cooperation.

7) Political implications of the portrayal of violence, crime and sex in mass media.

8) Political implications in advertising.

9) The political economy of the culture industry.

Course Schedule:

Week 1 Introductory survey.
2 Sports; the Super Bowl.
3 Media images vs. reality: stereotypes, celebrities and authorities, Disneyland, tourist attractions, fantasy, diversion, commercialland.
4, 5 Television and films.
6 Popular music, radio. (Midterm examination)
7, 8 Print media: magazines, newspapers, popular books, comic books and strips.
9 Mass-mediated politics, news, religion.
10 Summary: possible alternatives to mass culture toward a true popular culture.
11 Final examination.

The following quotations are distributed the first class meeting and form a point of reference for discussion throughout the term.

We shall show them that they are weak, that they are only pitiful children, but that childlike happiness is the sweetest of all. They will become timid and will look to us and huddle close to us in fear, as chicks to the hen. They will marvel at us and will be proud at our being so powerful and clever, that we have been able to subdue such a turbulent flock of thousands of millions. They will tremble more weakly before our wrath, their minds will grow fearful, they will be quick to shed tears like women and children, but they will be just as ready at a sign from us to pass in laughter and rejoicing, to happy mirth and childish song. Yes, we shall set them to work, but in their leisure hours we shall make their life like a child's game, with children's songs and innocent dances.

Fyodor Dostoevsky, "The Grand Inquisitor," Chapter in *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880)

What's finished is the idea that this great country is dedicated to the freedom and flourishing of every individual in it. It's the single, solitary human being who's finished. Because this is no longer a nation of independent individuals. This is a nation of two hundred-odd million, transistorized, deodorized, whiter than-white, steel-belted bodies, totally unnecessary as human beings and as replaceable as piston rods....

We are no longer an industrialized society; we aren't even a post-industrial or technological society. We are now a corporate society, a corporate world, a corporate universe. This world is a vast cosmology of small corporations orbiting around large corporations who, in turn, revolve around giant corporations, and this whole endless, eternal, ultimate cosmology is expressly designed for the production and consumption of useless things.

Howard Beale, in *Network*, by Paddy Chayefsky (1976)

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The spectacle is the continuously produced and therefore continuously evolving pseudo-reality, predominantly visual, that each individual encounters, inhabits and accepts as public and official *reality*, thereby denying as much as is possible, the daily private reality of exploitation, pain, suffering and inauthenticity he or she experiences.

Norman Fruchter, "Movement Propaganda and the Culture of the Spectacle" (1971)

People who watch television the most are unread, uneducated, untraveled and unable to concentrate on single subjects more than a minute or two.

Producer of "Top 40 Stones" local TV newscasts, quoted in *San Francisco Examiner*, March 16, 1975

We sophisticates can listen to a speech for a half hour, but after ten minutes the average guy wants a beer.

President Richard Nixon, as quoted by his former speechwriter, William Safire, in *Before the Fall*

Resolved, that the National Council of Teachers of English support the efforts of English and related subjects to train students in a new literacy encompassing not only the decoding of print but the critical reading, listening, viewing, and thinking skills necessary to enable students to cope with the sophisticated persuasion techniques found in political statements, advertising, entertainment, and news....

Resolution passed by National Council of Teachers of English, November 1975

Special Features

Rather than writing papers, students are asked to keep a class journal, to be turned in at two or three points during the term. The journal is used for afterthoughts on each class period, comments on required and recommended readings, and applications of ideas from the class to daily monitoring of popular culture—TV programs, films, newspapers and magazines, ads, popular music, radio, current best-selling books, sports, tourism, etc.

Sample midterm exam question:

Write an essay summarizing the pro's and con's of the argument that mass culture (as opposed to popular culture) just gives the people what they want. Support the various lines of argument with applications to specific fields of mass culture, including—but not restricted to—at least two of the following: the Superbowl and other televised sports, Disneyland or other tourist attractions, TV commercials. Make specific references to arguments presented by each of the following—Real, Cirino, Fiedler, MacDonald, Brantlinger—supplemented by recommended readings and your own observations.

Sample Final Exam Question (take-home exam):

One of the main arguments made by critics on both the political left and right is that mass culture (and the mass society of which it forms an integral part) is tending more and more toward social-cultural conformity and unquestioning support for the established order. Write an essay enumerating and analyzing examples and patterns drawn from the readings and class discussions that substantiate this argument, along with opposing examples representing cultural diversity and critical questioning

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of the status quo in the United States. Try to maintain a reasonably objective, balanced and unemotional tone in which you are trying to summarize arguments pro and con rather than taking sides.

Bibliography

Texts:

Real, Michael. *Mass Mediated Culture* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1977.

Introductory and concluding chapters survey theoretical positions of critics of mass and popular culture, while other chapters apply these critical perspectives to current topics such as the Superbowl, Disneyland, televised medical dramas, Billy Graham-style religion, and political campaigning.

Cirino, Robert. *We're Being More Than Entertained*. Honolulu: Lighthouse, 1977.

A study of the political implications in the content and institutional structure of American mass media, in which media messages are analyzed for their explicit or implicit support of conservative, liberal, socialist or libertarian ideology.

Weibel, Kathryn. *Mirror, Mirror. Images of Women Reflected in Popular Culture* (Garden City, N.J.: Anchor, 1977).

Historical survey of stereotypes of the social role of women in fiction, TV, movies, women's magazines and fashion.

Chapple, Robert and Reebee Garafalo. *Rock 'n' Roll Is Here to Pay* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1977).

Marxist analysis of the politics and economics of the popular music industry over the course of the twentieth century.

Fiedler, Leslie A. "Towards a Definition of Popular Literature," in *Superculture*, C.W.E. Bigsby, ed., Bowling Green, OH.: Popular Press, 1975.

Refutation of the distinction between high and popular culture and of critics who claim that mass culture manipulates and debases popular taste.

Macdonald, Dwight, excerpts from "Masscult and Midcult," in Macdonald, *Against the American Grain* (New York: Random House, 1961).

Classic expression of the distinction between mass and popular culture and of the appeal of mass culture to the lowest common denominator.

Brantlinger, Patrick. "Giving the Public What it Wants," *Public Doublespeak Newsletter*, III, 2, 1976.

Refutation of defenses of the culture industry that claim it simply reflects popular tastes rather than determining them.

Gitlin, Todd, "The Televised Professional," *Social Policy*, November/December 1977.

Argues that the idealization of professionals on TV dramas, as well as their depiction through stereotyped, fixed dramatic formulas and formal structures, fosters passivity, dependency and legitimation of the established social order in the minds of the audience.

Recommended Readings:

Daniel Boorstin, *The Image*
Fyodor Dostoevsky, "The Grand Inquisitor"
Herbert Gans, *Popular Culture and High Culture*
Rose K. Goldsen, *The Show and Tell Machine*
Paul Hoch, *Rip Off the Big Game*
Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World Revisited*
James Michener, *Sports in America*
Michael Novak, *The Joy of Sports*
Robert Sobel, *The Manipulators: America in the Media Age*
Benjamin Stein, *The View from Sunset Boulevard*
College English, April 1977, issue on Mass Culture, Political Consciousness and English Studies.

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